

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Loraine Yamada

Loraine Ishikawa Yamada was born in 1927 in Honomū. The fifth of nine children, she moved with her family to O'ahu at the age of three. She grew up on her parents' poultry farm in Wai'alae and attended Wai'alae School, Kaimukī Intermediate School, Kaimukī High School and the Hawai'i Institute of Technology. She later received her high school diploma in Hilo.

During the war, she worked at a lunch stand at the Waikīkī War Memorial Natatorium, and later as a waitress at Chicken Korner and *Kau-Kau* Korner. From 1946 to 1947 she worked as a waitress at Hickam Field Officers' Club dining room. She married Masao Yamada in 1947 and moved to Hilo, where she began working in the Yamada Furniture Store which is owned by her husband's family. One year later she moved back to Honolulu for three years and then returned to Hilo in 1951 where she lives today. She managed her daughter's band from 1978 to 1981, then worked part-time at the University of Hawai'i-Hilo bookstore until 1987.

Active in music most of her life, she sang with the Hawai'i Takarazuka Music Club before and after World War II. The war brought an end to her Japanese-style singing activities and she turned to English music and acted in theatrical productions throughout the war years.

She retired from the Kona Surf Resort Hotel and Country Club in 1991. She was widowed in 1992 and has six children.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Loraine Yamada (LY)

July 26, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is an interview with Loraine Yamada at Porteus [Hall] at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Honolulu, Hawai'i, July 26, 1993. The interviewer is Holly Yamada.

I'd first like to ask you about your parents.

LY: Oh, they are both gone, but you mean you want to know where they came from? Or . . .

HY: Yeah, when did they immigrate to Hawai'i?

LY: Oh, gosh. I think it was about 1917 or thereabouts. They came from Okinawa.

HY: And, did they live in Maui first? Came to Maui?

LY: Yeah Maui—I mean they all landed in O'ahu first because the immigration station is here, and then they go to their different islands where their [plantation] contract was, I think. I think that's how it worked. And they went to Maui first, and from there they went to the Big Island. And then they moved to O'ahu, and they spent the rest of their life here in O'ahu.

HY: What did your father [Genshin Ishikawa] do on Maui? He was a [plantation] contract worker?

LY: He did work in the plantation for a short while.

HY: Do you know which one?

LY: I really don't know.

HY: That's okay, whatever you can remember.

LY: Yeah, and then, I know when they went to the Big Island they were with Honoka'a Sugar [Company] for a while, and then they moved to Honomū—that's where I was born.

HY: What year was that?

LY: Nineteen twenty-seven.

HY: Okay.

LY: So, after me---I was not quite three when we moved to O'ahu. And the rest of the family, which is one brother and three sisters, were born in O'ahu.

HY: And you would be the fifth child, is that right?

LY: I was, let's see, one, two, three, four, yeah that's right.

HY: Okay. Did your mother [Matsu Kaneshiro Ishikawa] also work?

LY: Yeah, well, she worked in the plantation, too. From what she told me, they used to take their babies to the fields and put them in a little basket, and worked in the fields along with the other mothers, yeah. And that was just for a little while. Once she moved here, she never worked in the plantation.

HY: Did she work at all?

LY: (Yes), she was a poultry farmer. Both of them.

HY: Okay. So that was three years after you were born?

LY: (Yes.)

HY: So it would be 1930.

LY: Right.

HY: Okay. Do you know what it was that made your parents move from Maui to the Big Island?

LY: I think my mother's three brothers and her father was already living on the Big Island and I guess they wanted to be close (together). My dad had no relatives in Hawai'i, but my mother did. So, they moved to the Big Island.

HY: And what was it that made them move from the Big Island to O'ahu?

LY: Well, my father was not---he just didn't want to be a laborer. He said---I think he has a brighter future in O'ahu so he came here. But he had---they started the poultry farming, but he was also a tailor, he was a barber, a contractor, and what else. . . . On the Big Island, see, just before he left he was a cab driver from what I hear. And so he thought opportunities were greater on this island.

HY: So he began his own business in poultry farming?

LY: Yeah. Even the barber yeah, he had his own barbershop.

HY: Do you remember the name of his barbershop?

LY: Wai'alae Barbershop.

HY: Wai'alaе Barbershop. And where was it?

LY: (Laughs) And it was right on Wai'alaе [Avenue], between Wai'alaе Store, and we had a Wai'alaе Service Station, and right between those two buildings there was this small little barbershop (laughs).

HY: And, how long did he have that for? Were you . . .

LY: Maybe not too long. I think my father tired easily of everything. He was like a jack-of-all-trades, master of none (laughs). Because I remember when I was in elementary school [Wai'alaе School] when he had the barbershop, and by the time when I was in intermediate school [Kaimukī Intermediate School], I know he was contracting. He built the homes in Wai'alaе Ranch. And it still—oh, I don't know if they tore it down, but few years back when I went to look, the houses were still standing, yeah.

HY: Did he have the poultry farm and the barbershop at the same time?

LY: Mm, hmm [yes]. So my mother took care of the chickens.

HY: So that was mainly her job?

LY: Mm hmm, yeah.

HY: And where was the poultry farm? Was it . . .

LY: Right there in Wai'alaе.

HY: And was it—did you live on the farm?

LY: We all did.

HY: What street did you live on?

LY: (It) was called 'Aki'aki Place. And it's still there. Of course they became fee-simple lot.

HY: Can you describe the house and the farm?

LY: Oh yeah. It was a two-story house, three bedrooms and a big living room upstairs. And one small room was the entire shrine—you know the Buddhist shrine with the altar and everything. Then downstairs we had another three bedrooms, and another living room, big dinning room, and a kitchen. And bathrooms were always outside. So we had a big patio between the bathhouse and the main house, yeah.

So, I remember my mom you know. I think she was going through menopause. Now I can recall because she said she's always hot. She would take a bath, and she would. . . . And you know, the old folks, no hesitation, no modesty about showing their body. It used to make me sick, you know. (HY laughs.) She would put on her underwear, she'd put her big towel around her waist, but she'll sit on the bench in the patio, (where) the whole family passe(s) by, you know, with her breast(s) exposed and she's fanning herself. She did that until almost

the day she died, until she was bedridden. Because when I came to visit her after I got married, I had all my children, and they lived in Kalihi then, yeah. I'd go visit. . . . She'll take a bath, she comes in the living room—she lived with my brother and his wife—same thing with her breast(s) exposed, she don't care who's over there, you know, and (she'll be) fanning herself.

I said, "Oh for heaven's sakes! Go into the room and put on some clothes!" It's so funny.

And she said, "What?"

I said, "You think, you have—look at your breasts!"

(Laughing) She would say, "So what?"

And I said, "It's ugly that's why, go put on—cover it up!"

Oh, I tell you she was so funny, but most of the old ladies were like that—you know the first generation. I guess it was part of their culture, they all bathed together. But we were—the children were all so private. We . . .

HY: Different from . . .

LY: Real different. Extremely different (laughs).

HY: What about the farm? What was it like?

LY: We had a big property, and the farm itself was right on the same premise as the house. The residence right there, and the coops were all lined up, you know the chicken coops, and the hatchery, because we used to incubate the eggs, and raise the chicks to all the different stages till they became stewing hens (laughs).

HY: Who did you sell to?

LY: We marketed our eggs, and our fryers, and roasters, at that time, to Star Market. There was a Star Market right here in Mō'ili'ili, by the park.

HY: Oh yeah, it's still there.

LY: Yeah, it's still there. That's where we used to market. Plus there was another Chinese market. I can't remember the name. Pretty close to that Star Market. And on Sundays, we would take all the live chickens and the eggs to 'A'ala Market where they had open market for walk-in traffic. Yeah, we did that. And we would also send in our eggs to Star Market, and we had our regular customers—mostly in the Kaimukī district. Tuesdays and Saturdays was egg-delivery day, yeah.

HY: Would the kids deliver?

LY: Mostly, yeah, my brother and myself.

HY: Would you go house-to-house with eggs?

LY: Yeah, carrying them all in baskets. I can't believe we did that, and we were just—oh we did that for years.

HY: How old were you when you started doing that?

LY: Gee, I was, I think from around fourth grade, yeah, and my brother was (in the) sixth grade. We did it until, oh, he went to. . . . He was going to start high school, and we walk all the way from Wai'alae as far as to about Ninth Avenue. Can you believe?

And, so Tuesday we would start peddling after Japanese[-language] school [Wai'alae Japanese-language School]. So when we were coming home it's dark. Yeah, it's night. Saturdays not too bad because we only go to [Japanese-]language school, and so as soon as language school is finished—we start maybe early afternoon—so by dark we're home. But I used to hate Tuesdays because we're in Japanese school until five o'clock, then we start going out. Oh boy, I used to hate it. (By the) time (we) come home you know, sometimes it's after eight. We walk over, we walk back. That's quite a walk. Hilly, too, (laughs). Yeah.

HY: Who would buy the eggs? I mean, who was living all in that area?

LY: Well, as I recall, there were a lot of Chinese and Portuguese in Kaimukī. Today, I guess, it's all mixed, but those days there (were) certain district(s) where you have more (of) certain ethnic group, and Kaimukī was mostly Chinese and Portuguese, few Japanese, but you rarely found any different race.

HY: How is it that your parents obtained that large a property there?

LY: Well, it was farming country then, so we had all kinds of farmers. And these were (under) Bishop Estate, all lease land to farmers. So we had the poultry farmers, dairy, we had hog farmers, and produce farmers. Florists had their own nurseries. And these were the kind of farming that went on in the whole Wai'alae district.

HY: What was the ethnic . . .

LY: Mostly Japanese.

HY: Mostly Japanese farmers?

LY: Mostly Japanese, yeah. The dairies, we had a few Japanese dairymen, but Portuguese were known for dairy work, too. Immediately across us was a big dairy, [Manuel] Costa[s] dairy. And they raised cows and they sold their—pasteurized their milk and then marketed the milk. We used to make our own butter because my oldest brother worked at the dairy, feeding the cows early in the morning, milking them. So we got all the milk, and it was our project—we make our own butter.

And then my brother—because he had to quit school to help support the family, big family. So later on he went to Foremost Dairy [Foremost Dairies-Hawai'i] and it was called Moanalua Dairy [Ltd.] at that time, and he worked there until he died. Over—almost fifty

years he worked for Foremost, and when he died he was from. . . . The milk deliveryman he became—oh, he went through all different levels, and he was a supervisor when he died. And by then they were making their delicious ice cream, and all the things that they marketed were quite different from the time he was a boy.

HY: Would you say that most of the kids had to work?

LY: (Oh yes!) He worked in the dairy. My second brother (loved) anything to do with radio, electronics, and back then—this was in the [19]30s now—he wrote to International Correspondence School[s] and he took up radio mechanic, and he was hired by a Kaimukī radio shop, which I can't remember the name, but was Portuguese owners.

And he'd come home, he'd experiment with all the kind of stuff. Sometimes, the whole house would sound like an explosion because he's touching electricity. And I remember he'd be playing with the Morse code (imitates Morse code sound) in the room.

And we were the first ones in our area to have a radio. That RCA [Radio Club of America] radio—you know the dog with the horn? The phonograph? And people would all come over to look and listen, fascinated you know, what electronics can do. And in Hawai'i, especially in the country like Wai'ālae—back then it was real country—hardly anyone had washing machine. But unfortunately, he had to have surgery for his sinus, and within two weeks he was dead, got infected. But he used to tell my mother, "As soon as I get well, I'm going to buy you a washing machine, so you don't have to wash clothes by hand." And it was years after that we got one. He quit school, (and) he went into professional training to learn this trade, and he was a good one but he only had a short life.

See, your father [LY's brother-in-law] lost a brother, who was nineteen in 1937, and that was the same year I lost my brother at the age of nineteen. They were both nineteen. Strange yeah?

HY: Interesting.

LY: Yeah, so your uncle died in March, and I lost my brother in July, yeah. Oh boy.

HY: Appendicitis, yeah?

LY: Yeah.

HY: Yeah, that's what I heard.

LY: And it wasn't even ruptured. They just introduced the spinal, what do you call it (sighs), anesthetic, and the doctor did that to—what was his name, Iwao [Yamada], Uncle Iwao [HY's uncle, LY's brother-in-law], and (the doctor) didn't even have the antidote—overdose. By then it touched his heart, and by the time he called his doctor friend to come over and help him, it was too late. So they did an autopsy afterwards, and nothing had ruptured.

HY: I never knew that. I thought . . .

LY: So the doctor felt so bad, and I don't blame him. The parents were all upset of course. But

they forgave the doctor. And the doctor quit his practice for a while, and went on a trip. He couldn't handle.

HY: Who was the doctor?

LY: [Zenko] Matayoshi. And he came back, and he took care of both your grandparents until they died. I mean, anytime something went wrong, he was right there to take care of them. See, after the forgiving and everything, *Obaban* [LY's mother-in-law, HY's grandmother] was in the hospital at one time because she was a diabetic, and she almost lost her (gangrenous) foot, but the doctor saved it. And that's when you know, because it was a private hospital, and they would talk for hours, and—because your grandpa told me—the doctor said he felt so bad, but he could not replace (Uncle Iwao's) life, yeah. But for them forgiving him, and then giving him another chance to make up, he said he's so grateful, and he can never thank them enough. He passed away. And his son became a doctor, too. He just retired—the son. Yeah, so it's like that.

And my third brother, he quit school, too. See when, I think you know, when you have a large family, and you can't provide, the only thing that goes through a child's mind is, "I got to grow up fast, go (to) work. I don't like this kind of life." So he became a mechanic. He was somewhat like my brother that died. He continued where the other one left off, but he went more into auto [mechanics].

HY: Did any of your siblings work in the barbershop?

LY: Um um.

HY: No.

LY: I wanted to be a beautician, but my father said no.

HY: So you never worked in the barbershop?

LY: No, never.

HY: Who were his customers?

LY: Oh, the people around Wai'alae.

HY: The neighborhood?

LY: Yeah.

HY: Yeah. Japanese?

LY: Because the community---yeah was big! I mean, anybody if you tell them in the [19]30s, [19]40s, Wai'alae was predominately all Japanese. That's how we had a very large Japanese school from kindergarten until high school. And that's kind of unusual to find in a Japanese school.

HY: What was the name of the school that you went to?

LY: Wai'ala'e Japanese-[language] School.

HY: That was the after school?

LY: The present Star of the Sea School was Wai'ala'e Japanese School. And the student body was big, too. So, as far as culture, I'm thankful that I went to that school. I learned a lot of things that, I notice, a lot of my friends that went to Japanese[-language] school never had the chance.

We learned—you know, tea? Japanese culture, they show you how you pour tea and how you stir. And it's for the birds. I can't. . . . I don't have that kind of patience, but there's a meaning to all that. You stir certain way so many times, you go back so many times, you bow, and who wants to drink tea by then? (Laughs)

But anyway, you learn that, you learn Japanese sewing which is all done by hand. How you sew a little—it starts with a baby's underwear, you know, the slip sort of, for the kimono. Then you learn the baby's kimono. You learn the baby's jacket which is called *chanchanko*—to wear with the kimono, you know, sleeveless. And then, then you learn *hitotsumi*, which is kimono for the young-age girls and boys. Then you learn for the teenage-size kimono, and then the adult. Then you learn to make the *haori*, they call *haori*—it's a coat for women that wear kimono. Then you learn how to make *obi*—*obi* is the sash for the kimono. You learn flower arrangement. So all those things I learned when I went to Japanese school, you know, and I consider myself very fortunate. Because all these things came in handy.

HY: What language did you speak at home? Did you speak Japanese?

LY: Japanese. My parents spoke Okinawan and Japanese. I didn't know a word of English when I went to first grade. Nothing. Yeah, so three languages, basically, was spoken at home.

HY: And when you started school, was that a common experience for kids to not speak English?

LY: No, not when I went. I think I was the only one. I don't know how come. I just couldn't understand why—and those days I think parents are so busy (laughing) raising their children and working hard. It's not like today. I know I prepared my children, "You going to start school, and you're going to learn this and. . . ." And they get all excited. But nobody told me, "You going to school." And they going to leave me in this strange building, where they strip you the first day you go there, to get your inoculation and vaccination, your physical. It's done in this huge room with all these first graders because it's farming country, and it's considered probably, indigent. These are all farmers (family members). They don't go to the doctors or anything. So when they come, there's a doctor that's assigned to the school. Examine all the kids, and you get your vaccination then, and your injection for the other communicable disease like chicken pox, and mumps, and that kind of stuff.

So now, I getting all poked with this needle, and my father left me. And I ran out of the building, and I remember he had a Model T. He's going home, and I started chasing that car. (Laughs) And then when it slowly disappeared, I walked back. And I don't know what they're

saying, you know because I don't understand the language. Then, I tell you, I go in this room, and the classes were big.

HY: How many students?

LY: We had about fifty. Fifty you know, and not only. . . . This is first grade, and you have four classes of first graders, and they('re) all large classes. So if you think you have four of fifty, that's 200 kids, only one grade level. So I'm in there, and this one was from kindergarten until sixth grade, elementary school—Wai'ālae elementary school [Wai'ālae School].

So we go there. I had a big, fat Hawaiian teacher, I don't know what she's saying, and that's all I know. She'd start pounding the desk, and she('ll say), "Stick candy." (To myself), "Oh she's going to give candy." I raised my hand you know, and the boy next to me which was not my immediate neighbor, but I know the parents used to visit my house. He said, "Don't raise your hand! 'Stick candy' means a spanking, the paddle." Look like, shaped like a stick candy (sucker).

And I go, "Ohhh!" (Laughs) But I think the teacher knew. Yeah, so.

HY: Is she the one that gave you your English name? [Lorraine's Japanese name is Tsutae.]

LY: No. My English name I didn't get until I was in the sixth grade. This one was Miss Williams, and my sixth-grade teacher was Mrs. [Mabel] Mahikoa.

HY: And were these all Japanese kids? Pretty much, your school?

LY: Yeah. Those days, wherever you went, in my area anyway, majority of them were Japanese. Few Hawaiians, few Portuguese. Maybe one Puerto Rican. Hardly any *Haoles*. Yeah was like that.

HY: What do you remember about playtime? Did you play with the neighborhood kids? Or . . .

LY: Once in a while. Our days, everybody work from the time you're little. I have to watch kids, you know.

HY: Your younger . . .

LY: I have the twins [twin sisters], yeah, the twins. And I also worked the farm. At least the simple tasks like collecting the eggs. You going to make many trips because you can't carry too many eggs at one time, but that's your job. Wash the troughs for the water, because all the water, you know—when we('re) in school it's not too bad, my mother has to do it. But weekends and summer, two o'clock all the troughs have to be filled with water, in order for the chicken(s) to survive, and we have to collect the eggs, and the chickens have to be fed twice a day.

Oh, it was—I used to hate it. Then, that's not all. After you've picked the eggs, you have to clean them. Make sure there's no doo-doo on it. Clean it all, then you have to check and see that they're not fertile, then you have to pack them in the boxes (sighs), ready for market. Unending. You can never go anyplace on a vacation because you're dealing with livestock.

And then if you did go it was only for church function, but you must be home. Somebody has to be home by two o'clock to take care of the chickens. Yeah, so.

HY: Was your---you said there was a room in your house with a . . .

LY: Shrine, yeah.

HY: Shrine, Buddhist shrine. Was your family active in . . .

LY: Mm hmm [yes]. We went to church every Sunday—Buddhist church yeah. There was one in Wai'alae, and then . . .

HY: What was the name of the church?

LY: Wai'alae Hongwanji, and then the main one [Hongwanji Mission] is in Fort Street. On special occasions like New Year's or something, we would go to the main temple, but Sundays. . . . The only time you can be excused is when you're seriously sick. If it's only a minor cold or no fever, you go. (Laughs) Oh I tell you.

HY: So you didn't have time to play that much?

LY: Hardly, hardly. Yeah.

HY: What about with your brothers and sisters?

LY: Even then. We all---it's in between that we might play or. . . . And this was common with every home. So sometimes when everything is done which is about 5:00, 5:30, maybe the neighborhood, my immediate neighbors—and they were all boys—we would play. I have to participate in all-boy games because I was the only girl, you know, kind of same age level.

And you're not allowed to go to a distant, what you call, home to play with your friends. You got to be readily available at one call if you're needed so you just can't go. That's farm life.

HY: So how was your adjustment to school then, after the initial shock?

LY: Good, was good.

HY: You got to like it?

LY: Yeah. Once I learned the language. See, that's why I was in the D class in first grade, because all those that don't speak Japanese—I mean English—or first time in that school, they would kind of put you in the D class to observe, and then they shift you from the second grade.

But from the second grade I went to A class, right through. Only the first grade. And then we had English[-language] school until two o'clock. And then those days, we did monitor work at school, too, yeah like cleaning the rooms and clapping the erasers. All the students did those things. So they allow that one hour space to start [Japanese-]language school because predominantly all the children went to language school. So three o'clock, Japanese[-language]

school start.

HY: Would it be in the same facility, the same building?

LY: No, no, different.

HY: Oh, so where would you go for that then?

LY: Okay, I go to Wai'ala'e School which is on Twentieth [Nineteenth] Avenue, I think. Twentieth and Harding [Avenue]. From there, Star of the Sea School [originally Wai'ala'e Japanese-language School].

HY: Oh, I see, I see.

LY: You walk, and we go to Japanese[-language] school, and when it is finished, then you walk home which is further towards—going towards 'Āina Haina. Yeah, that's where we would be living, 'Aki'aki Place. And so the older children would start Japanese school at four o'clock. So by the time they come home, it's after five. Always the class is for an hour.

And of course, most of the kids hated Japanese school—especially the boys—so they play hooky (laughs). But these are all considered private schools, so you pay tuition. But when you're kids, I guess, like I know my brother played hooky a lot. They don't realize the hard-earned money the parents spend to send you for an education, yeah. But I loved Japanese school so I used to look forward to going. Most of them didn't like it.

HY: What did your father do then after he quit the barbershop, then he contracted [was a construction contractor] . . .

LY: Oh, he went into contracting, yeah. And he did that for quite a while until he was in his early sixties. Then he fell off the roof and broke his leg. And since then, he never went back to contracting and he helped my mother with the farming.

And when Bishop Estate decided to sell all these lands fee simple and they made it into a residential district—subdivided and everything—all the farmers there had to move out.

So, my oldest brother asked them to come and live with them in Kalihi. They had built a new home, but they said no. As long as they're healthy, they want to work on a farm. So they went to Koko Head and they lived there, I think, '55, '65, I think around almost fifteen years. They went into produce farming, and that was hard work.

I wasn't there, I was already married and living on the Big Island, but whenever I visited them I thought, "Wow." And I told them, "Why do you want to work so hard?"

They said, "Oh we're so lucky, you know, we're healthy. If we quit working we're going to die."

So they stayed there until they felt they no longer. . . . All these different illnesses start

coming out with old age, so they went and they lived with my brother until they both passed away. Yeah.

HY: Where did you go to high school?

LY: Kaimukī. At that time, Kaimukī Intermediate [School] and Kaimukī High School were combined. Half a day was for intermediate, high school was for afternoon. And at Kaimukī High School—the present one—was never there and I think the first graduating class was in 1932, '42, '50. I think 1949, '50, around there. My twin sister(s), they [the twins] were the first graduating class of Kaimukī High School, the new one [on Kaimukī Avenue]. Till then, you know . . .

HY: Where was the—so was the old one located in the same place?

LY: No it was toward Fort Ruger—Diamond Head side. You know where Diamond Head [Memorial] Cemetery? As you going there, you going to pass that school—Kaimukī Intermediate School.

HY: Oh I see, and the high school was located in that building [as well].

LY: Yeah, and I think because [there were] more and more children from 'Āina Haina—people started building homes [out] that way because it was not heavily populated at that time—and as far as Koko Head, all the children went to the same school, Wai'ālae School. And from there to Lili'uokalani [Intermediate] School. I don't know if you know, right on Wai'ālae Avenue across Kaimukī Theatre, that was the [Lili'uokalani] Intermediate School. And then, Kaimukī High School. It became so large that only the seventh graders were at Lili'uokalani [Intermediate] School. Eighth and ninth graders were at Kaimukī Intermediate morning time only because that's how large the student body became. And then from one o'clock until five was high school.

HY: Was split shifts.

LY: Mm hmm, because till then, McKinley High School was the biggest student body. All schools up to Koko Head went to McKinley [High School], so you can imagine how. . . . McKinley and then came Farrington [High School]—those two schools were the biggest. And then came Hilo High School. Can you imagine . . .

HY: Then came Hilo?

LY: Yeah, Hilo High School('s)—big student body.

HY: I think we're running out of tape here.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: This is a continuation of the interview with Loraine Yamada.

When you were in high school you. . . Was that when you started working at Spud's Laundry?

LY: No, before, before.

HY: Oh, before then, when you were in intermediate school?

LY: Yeah, intermediate school.

HY: How did you get that job?

LY: Oh, I took my brother's social security card because I was underage. I was only---child labor was [allowed only] from [age] sixteen, and I must have been about thirteen or fourteen. I took his card. They don't know the difference because that's a *Haole* firm—Spud's Laundry. And so my name would—even though it's Loraine, you know when I went through elementary school it was always through my Japanese name [Tsutae], and my brother also was Motoyasu, and I figure they don't know the difference, they never did. They took his number and hired me. (Laughs) So I worked at Spud's Laundry.

HY: Where was that located?

LY: Right on King Street. I'm trying to think. It was almost towards the Honolulu Rapid Transit [Company], what you call, barnyard. So I would say Kaka'ako, around Kaka'ako, yeah.

And then I worked for various doctors' homes baby-sitting when I was even younger. And most of the doctors are wealthy families. Usually had their own housekeeper, cooks, and nursemaid. So I would---they call the baby-sitter nursemaid those days and I would be the baby-sitter.

HY: What was the ethnicity of the families that you sat for?

LY: Mostly Caucasian, yeah, yeah.

HY: Caucasian. And when you worked at Spud's, what kind of. . . Can you describe the duties that you did?

LY: I was a checker first. All the bags of laundry that came in, and it seemed like most of it was from the navy, so . . .

HY: What year was this about?

LY: Oh, this was about 1940 or '41 around there I think . . .

HY: Right before the war?

LY: Yeah. And what you have to do, the laundry comes in bags. You empty the bag and you have to sort it out, the dark from the light, and then if it's extremely dirty, then I guess you got to

put [it] in another pile, or make sure that everything is marked. If it's not, you have to mark it, the same number, so they know that after it's done it goes to the same package or whatever. Anyway, I was a checker, and that was a filthy job because you know . . .

HY: All the laundry still dirty, yeah?

LY: Mm, smelly. And then I became a presser. The big iron, you know the one that you push down right and you go (makes a spraying sound) with the steam come out (laughs). I do the pants. Sailor's pants are easy. They're bell bottoms, but you know, no crease. So it's easy. I did that. Press flat things like handkerchief. That's the kind of job I did. And this was only mainly for summer between school.

HY: Do you remember the names of the owners?

LY: No, I don't but it was Spud's Laundry.

HY: What was your wage, do you remember?

LY: Must have been so cheap—maybe twenty-five, thirty cents an hour—yeah, that's all.

HY: And why did you want to get a job when you were that young?

LY: Oh, like I told you earlier, I think most of us that came from big families that lived on a farm, just wanted to get out of this kind of living. And not everybody felt that way, but I felt, I don't care if I was a girl, I wanted to work, earn my own money, be independent and get out. That's how I used to think, and I don't care if I never see farm life again.

But you know, after I got married, I missed it. I love that country life, and I wanted my children to grow up—so I think was good I lived in Hilo because it was country. And nothing like farm life to bring up children. You learn so much about food, sharing, learning about nature, appreciating all this freedom. In a sense what I'm talking about is not living in a concrete jungle with paved roads. Country life—something about it. It's so good, and it's a . . . You know most all the people that lived on the farm shed lot of tears, sweat, and blood, but there's a closeness I think because we all have this something in common that we understand each other. And no matter where I go, even when I went to the Big Island.

Hilo is now mushrooming into a city and it's still way behind compared to Honolulu. But when we perform in the rural areas, whenever we're singing, and usually I am emceeing the program, I always say, "There's nothing like country folks. There's something about you people that will always be special to me." And you can tell. They're different. They're warmer, and they're more caring and they're more sharing, too. And that quality, you know, you rarely find it in the city.

I'm most thankful now. And I always tell my children because they don't know what farm life is, and that is why I think, you know, I wanted to work (at an) early age because I see the struggles on the farm and how you're tied up to this one place. This like your trap, there's no freedom. And I wanted to just get out, but anytime you want to get out, you have to have money, you have to give up something. So, that's how it was. (Laughs)

HY: So you took your brother's social security card.

LY: Yeah, right. And then as I grew older, I would work longer hours, different jobs. In fact I quit my. . . . I quit school, too, for a while and I just. . . . I thought I got to do something with my life.

HY: How old were you, then when you quit?

LY: I was about seventeen, sixteen, seventeen.

HY: Oh, this was when the war interrupted?

LY: Yeah, and then I finished up later, but then luckily you know, the music school accepted me and I finished that before I even went back to go get my high school diploma. I had to take the test in order to get that.

HY: What was the name of the music school?

LY: It was called Hawai'i Institute of Technology and that was in Kalihi on Kam[ehameha] IV Road where they taught mostly electronic things to the boys. For some reason the girls hardly took interest in that kind of stuff. And then on the separate building we had drama, radio, piano, vocal, and English, and radio speech—that's what we had.

HY: Just to go back a little bit, when did you develop an interest in music?

LY: Oh, ever since I was in elementary school. I was singing from the time I was about nine or ten.

HY: And did you perform?

LY: Mm hmm, in school mainly. And from the time I was about twelve, I used to perform in the theaters for parties.

HY: What theaters? Do you remember names?

LY: Yeah, Japanese theaters. There was a Park Theatre, an International Theatre.

HY: Is that the one [International Theatre] on College Walk?

LY: Mm hmm. And then we used to entertain at the various Royal Amusement[s Ltd.] theaters which was—Sheridan [Theatre] was one of the theaters that ran Japanese movies, so all related to Japanese culture, yeah. And then . . .

HY: And this was when you were still a teen?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm, in my teens.

HY: When were you performing? In your teens, okay.

LY: Yeah, up until---oh when the war came it stopped. And we continued, wait, the war ended in '45. . . . I went back to singing about 1946. And that was---early part of '46 hardly anything, but towards mid '46, all the Japanese culture was beginning to come back because all this came to a halt, but started to come back, and then International Theatre opened again for Japanese things. So we started practicing and we performed. Sometimes we used to perform at the different auditoriums, like lot of the Japanese shows were held at McKinley High School Auditorium and Kawanānako School[']s auditorium. Where else. . . .

HY: Can you describe what some of these theaters were like?

LY: International Theatre was beautiful, I thought. The seats were plush because it was one of the newer theaters. Stage was big, and I used to get all excited because that was the only theater I knew---right in the middle you know---they would press a button and the mike would come out of the floor. For us I thought that was . . .

HY: Glamour.

LY: Yeah. (Laughs) The other ones, you know, you going carry out the mike, but International Theatre the mike would come out of the floor and I thought, oh, that was something. And, of course, we used to go to the outside islands to perform, too.

HY: Who would come to these performances?

LY: Oh, those days the Japanese community was so into it, and lot of the older people were still living, you know, like your grandparents' age. See if they were living now, they would be over 100.

By that time---they are the group of people I think mostly that missed their ethnic music. So naturally when we sing---after the war, there were lines waiting to get in to see us perform, oh, which gave us a thrill too. So we had the Japanese classical dancers, and . . .

HY: Did you dance as well?

LY: No, my thing was mainly singing. And, well as a child you know, I used to do acting too---stage acting, yeah.

HY: And did you perform in the same theaters---drama?

LY: No, it was totally different again, yeah. In school I did, and that's how the strangest thing you know, I don't know whether I mentioned, but when we went to perform on the Mainland---and this is all Japanese now, Japanese entertainment---the people that were relocated in camps were just coming back to California, and we were the first group of Japanese ethnic entertainers to go into California. Oh they were so appreciative, I mean most of them were crying when we (were) singing.

And we also sang about the boys, 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] and 100[th Infantry Battalion]---the niseis. They had composed a song. Everywhere I went for---'45, '46, till the fifties---they would ask me to sing that song, and I would sing it. And it's a patriotic song, see.

One verse you sing 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] infantry, the second one you sing, "One *puka puka*," which is 100, 100 Infantry [Battalion]—and these were boys from Hawai'i. So that, too, you know. And that's where my Japanese school [Wai'alae Japanese-language School] principal was also taken away to the camp.

HY: What was his name?

LY: Miyagi, Miyagi, I forget his first name. Anyway, Mr. [Genei] Miyagi was the principal and his wife taught first grade. And we were at the Miyako Hotel in Los Angeles. Somebody said, "Oh, you know, Ishikawa [LY's family name]-*san* you have a visitor." So I go down to the lobby, and it was the principal and his wife because they saw (in) the paper that we're coming from Hawai'i and (saw) my name and I was singing from elementary school so they came (to see me). And they—oh the *okusan*—we call *okusan*, you know the principal's wife—she held me and she cried and cried.

And last year I didn't know, or early this year, she came (to Hawai'i). She's in her nineties. But when my sister told me about it—had I known, I would have flown over because she wanted to meet all, as many people as she can from Wai'alae because that was their home, that was where they taught until they were taken away. And in this Japanese paper they said it had all the history of what she did. And there was a place where they designated for her to meet with these Wai'alae people.

And I said, "Why didn't you tell me sooner?" She said they didn't realize they were reading the paper and it was all already over. So she went home to L.A. I never saw her.

But she knew, too, she's in her nineties, she won't have too much longer to live and I guess. . . . Oh, if I had known, I would have come to see her. And. . . .

HY: Did you have a group name in the early days?

LY: Yeah, the first group I went with was Hawai'i Takarazuka [Music] Club, that's what it was called. Until I got married I was with that group.

HY: How big a group was that?

LY: Not very big. But if you count all the dancers and the singers, I would say, gee about, only about fifteen. And then, while I was with them, I was also with Shinko Orchestra, and the leader of Shinko Orchestra is Harry Urata. He still teaches music—mostly *karaoke* singing. And he was one of the Japanese[-language] school instructors where I went to school. He came as a young man educated in Japan and he taught at Wai'alae Japanese[-language] School, and he was the leader of Shinko Orchestra.

So, I sang with them. And there was one called Nippon Orchestra. I sang with them for a little while.

HY: And were these all in Japanese, Japanese-style singing?

LY: Yeah, yeah.

HY: And you mentioned before that they didn't call it *enka* style . . .

LY: Yeah, they called it---it's the same kind of music but they called it *ryūkōka* which means pop song---the presently popular songs---so it's pop songs. Today, they don't call it *ryūkōka*, they call it *enka*, for some reason. I don't know what the origin is that they changed it to *enka*. But just recently on one of the Japanese shows, I heard them talking---I got the tail end of it. And they said, "Yes, but why do they call it *enka* now and back then we used to call it *ryūkōuta* or *ryūkōka*?"

You know? *Ryūkōka* means. . . . R-Y-U. Ryū-kō-ka. Today they call it *enka*. So. It means the same thing---pop songs.

HY: And where would the orchestras play? Would it be in these theaters as well?

LY: I was lucky that I was affiliated with the Matsuo Brothers [Tatsuro, Fred] that ran International Theatre because the opportunity that I had in traveling, everything was through the Matsuo Brothers [later became Fred Matsuo Productions]. They were all theater people from the issei---the fathers' time, you know. But the only sad thing is they all died young. And there's only one brother left. The only one that was not affiliated with the theater. He's the one that runs the saimin place---Shiro Matsuo [owner of Shiro's Hula Hula Drive In and Saimin Haven, Shiro's in Waipahu, Shiro's Personalized Catering, and Shiro's Saimin Haven]. Yeah, and so I've known Shiro since I was in my *hanabata* age. (HY laughs.) Yeah, and his brother---the one right above him---was the most charmer in the show business, but he took time off to serve in the 100th Infantry [Battalion]. So when he came back, we resumed our performance. But the funny thing is when the war started, everything came to a halt then we started again in '46. He just come back in early, maybe latter part of '45, and the first big show we had---you see weekly we would perform for the returnees coming back from the war, seemed like every weekend we had some kind of welcome-home party for some soldier that's coming home. But our biggest project was to raise money for the Hilo people that had lost their homes in the tidal wave of 1946. So we went there to perform and this was Hawai'i Takarazuka. And Hilo had formed their own Takarazuka Club under the sponsorship of Matsuo Brothers.

So when we performed, we would merge yeah, and that's how I met Uncle Masao [LY's husband, Masao Yamada]. He was in that group. Yeah, so the lucky part for me was---we didn't have the best orchestra, it was usually accompanied by piano and maybe a guitar and mandolin. But the orchestras that I love was not at the theater---the Shinko Orchestra and Nippon Orchestra was mainly for parties or get-together.

HY: Did they perform at clubs, too?

LY: Not this one. They had later on but I was married already.

HY: So it happened after.

LY: Yeah. Mine was just after the war and these people---Shinko Orchestra, the leader [Harry Urata] still does translation of songs for the third and fourth generation. He still does it. I see it in the paper. But the leader [Akira Takei] of Nippon Orchestra didn't live that long. After I got married, he passed away too. He was a music major in Japan. He used to deliver soda

water—soda pop—and he was. . . . Whenever there was a singing contest or something, he was asked to be the judge. That's how I met him. And he remembered me from singing as a child, and when I'm working part-time in the lunch stand, he's delivering the soda and he recognized me, and he would always say, "You know I gave you number one, you know, first, but unfortunately you came in second." He always talked about it, and then he asked me to sing for his orchestra. So I sang for a short while—oh, on a special performance.

HY: So this was when you were high school age?

LY: Yeah, yeah.

HY: Were you one of the younger members?

LY: Younger, yeah. I was . . .

HY: What age were more most of these people?

LY: Oh, they were I think early twenties, mid-twenties. Yeah.

HY: And after you worked at Spud's Laundry, that was just a summer job.

LY: Oh yeah.

HY: Okay, and you continued to baby-sit?

LY: No. As soon as I made sixteen now, I can work on my own so I got my own social security card. (Laughs) Yeah, and then I told myself I'm going to wait on tables because I get food to eat, and I have tips so I'll have money every day. So I went to work at Kau-Kau Korner that was world famous—right there in the crossroads, Waikīkī—Kapi'olani and Kalākaua. Now it's Coco's I think. Oh I don't know, maybe something else.

HY: No, Coco's isn't there anymore.

LY: Oh, what is it called?

HY: Is that where Hard Rock [Cafe] is now?

LY: I don't know. It's kind of like . . .

HY: Yeah, Coco's used to be there, and then now I think it's Hard Rock.

LY: Oh, okay. Anyway, the beginning was Kau-Kau Korner. And that was the only restaurant that was opened twenty-four hours a day even during the war, but everything is blacked out. And I worked as a carhop. So when the cars come in, I wait on the cars and I would work. Summertime I would work full-time, school days I would work just nighttime, short hours. Because by—I forget how it was now . . .

HY: The war started by that time, yeah?

LY: Oh yeah, the war had started. And when you come in, you have something like these vinyl awnings hanging over the door because no lights must show—the enemy can spot the light.

So you have to go in, and most of the customers were defense workers at Pearl Harbor—the night shift—and they had twenty-four hours work, also. They had, now let me see, the regular shift, the swing shift, the graveyard shift—so twenty-four hours a day you have all these customers coming in. And when they lifted the blackout, wasn't too bad. But . . .

HY: But it stayed open throughout, twenty-four hours?

LY: Yeah, that was the only place—Kau-Kau Korner. Then I went to work, oh, off and on you know. There was a place called Chicken Korner.

HY: Where was that?

LY: Chicken Korner was on Kalākaua Avenue right across Kūhiō Beach. And that was run by a man called Howdy Reynolds. He was a clown and he had his own show. And he had this well-known restaurant. I used to work there part-time, while I went to school. Then, oh boy I tell you. Oh and then during the summer, I worked at Waikīkī [War Memorial] Natatorium which is next to the [Waikīkī] Aquarium. Very successful lunch stand. I worked there summertime(s) and . . .

HY: What years was that?

LY: Gee that was 1943, I think.

HY: Who were the customers for that place?

LY: Oh, lot of locals plus military. Because the military, if I'm not mistaken, if I can remember correctly, it was right across the natatorium, it's Kapi'olani Park. Near the zoo. Over there was all military camp, all with pup tents and the soldiers were stationed there, and we were right across. And we had the Olympic-size swimming pool [Waikīkī War Memorial Natatorium], so the local kids are all involved and the aquarium. So we had from all, what you call, all kinds of business—lot of locals—that was their famous, favorite picnic and swimming spot. But things change. . . . Today, I don't think . . . I don't know if anybody goes there.

HY: No, they're still trying to figure out what to do with the natatorium, whether they're going to renovate or whether they're going to get rid of it. It's just sitting there.

LY: Yeah because all the famous swimmers were over there, and so I knew all the lifeguards because that's where they used to come and eat, at that lunch stand. And right past our lunch stand, you just walk and was that, what did they call that place? There was another big area where they. . . . Oh, they had the shower stalls and the bathrooms and, oh, there was a family living right there in the premises to take care of all this. And that was for the public, so maybe it was under [City and] County Parks and Recreation. Yeah, that's what it was.

HY: Were you living at home in Wai'alaie still?

LY: (Yes), I was.

HY: And then at that time you had stopped—you weren't going to school, is that right?

LY: No, I was.

HY: Oh you were.

LY: Yeah I was. I worked at that lunch stand during summer from eight [A.M.] to five [P.M.], six o'clock. Long hours, but I had a very nice boss. And then two, he was a college grad[uate]—Japanese man, Japanese couple, young couple—and he too, I think, was so ambitious. He left. He moved to Chicago, and I heard they're doing real well. And that was, gee, way back. I think they moved in 1950 or a little earlier. I got married in '47.

HY: Why is it that you stopped going to high school? What happened?

LY: Well, when the war came and we had to switch to Kaimukī [High School]. Already, for a while we didn't have school, and then I liked it. I'd rather work and earn money. So, I said, "I not going to school." Oh, my father was all upset. But I said, "No, I can always go back. I'm not going school." So I stopped for a while and then I went to school, but, see, I didn't go back to high school already, because when you miss one year, I'm not going to go back and fall back one year, you know.

So then I tried entering directly into that music school [Hawaii Institute of Technology], and I got in and I got a scholarship. So, I stayed there until just before I get married. When I finished that school, I was going to start music school in Los Angeles.

But that's when I met uncle [LY's husband, HY's uncle], see, on the way to perform and, boy, I tell you. We went together only two weeks, and two months later we got married. September, October. . . . Yeah. Can you believe? And we were married what, forty-five years. Crazy yeah? (Laughs)

But we had our share of misery, too, (laughs) but that's life. So I quit anyway, and then I went back and then. . . . In fact, when I went to Hilo as his wife, I don't know how many children I had [at that time]. I said I better get my diploma. So I took the test and I took a refresher course in English, and then I tried for the test, and luckily, I passed so I got my diploma.

HY: That was in '47?

LY: No, no. [Nineteen] forty-seven, November, I got married. This is after I got married, I don't know if I had all the children. Probably was . . .

HY: Oh, much later?

LY: Yeah, much later. And then I used to take lot of evening courses, and I used to tell

Uncle, "You should go too," because he was forced to quit. I was encouraged to go but I quit on my own.

See, Uncle didn't want me to work, but when the last child started school, I said, "No, I have to go to work. The kids need an education and you not making that much at the [Yamada Furniture] Store." But Hilo is so limited. You know what I mean? And if you don't go to school and get a good education, you're that much. . . . The only thing that I had going for me was I could speak Japanese and write Japanese. So in my later life, I went to Kona to work in the hotels where I can work with the Japanese tourists. That again, see . . .

HY: That's Kona Surf [Resort and Country Club]?

LY: Mm hmm. Thanks to my Japanese education which is still not enough. Thanks to that, I got a good job. But if I studied further, I could have gotten a better job. But I really enjoyed my job. It was like play. I run the weddings, I hear nice music. All day what I do is talk to these people, teach them little bit of Hawaiiana and they tip you big. (Laughs) I had it made. To me, I had the best job in the whole hotel. (Laughs) That was wonderful. But thanks to the Japanese teachings, I got what I wanted.

HY: I think we're running out of tape again.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-96-1-93; SIDE ONE

HY: Okay, you were talking about [Manuel] Costa[s] dairy changing?

LY: Yeah, and I think it was around 1937. Costa[s] farm moved and they went out further country to start a bigger dairy, and Mr. William Hopkins moved in to start his poultry farm, and he had one of the biggest poultry farms in O'ahu. And he was a Caucasian man. And when the war started, immediately all Japanese became suspects, and they sent the military force—the MPs [military police]—to go to every house and inspect the homes that they. . . . Well, you know, see, when you have fear, you don't trust. And it's awful. We feel we're faithful Americans, but naturally the old folks had brought home, I mean, kept in their homes some things of their ethnic background like the emperor's picture, some homes had the flag, and even the Buddhist religion is, they feel it's related to Japanese culture. And, you know, they didn't want anything Japanese. And, oh the families themselves got so scared that they have relatives pictures on the wall probably with kimono on—kimono reminds of their enemy country, so they would take all that down. Many of them burnt everything that was Japanese, or buried it, or hid it, including the emperor's picture.

But I remember all the military police were coming up the road, and Mr. Hopkins came out and he stopped them. He said, "You don't have to go through all this with the people over here. I've known them. They're not that kind of people, they're just farmers. They're happy where they are and I would be fully responsible." And you know, so they didn't. Which I, ho---and those days you don't see too many *Haoles*. And even for myself as a child you know, and I see all these soldiers now they're all *Haoles*, and they have guns, rifles,

bayonets. And they even came to where I was working, you know that natatorium? With the bayonets they came in because it was Japanese people that were running [the lunch stand where LY was working].

And they're afraid of us maybe even though we look small and harmless, but we're afraid of them, too, (laughs) because they talk so different. You know, we weren't used to listening to southern accents, like, ho, was so different. And, yeah I was so nervous. We didn't do anything wrong, but see, when you're ignorant of anything the fear becomes so magnified, you know, that you shiver. And especially for the first generation because there were few older people that were working where I was working. Oh . . .

HY: At the [lunch stand by the] natatorium?

LY: Mm hmm. The lady wanted to cry, she's so scared. But once you get to know people, see they('re) human just like us—they're nice. But when you don't know, hoo, spooky.

But Mr. Hopkins played a big role in protecting us (and) backing us up.

HY: Did they listen to him, then?

LY: Yeah. All above Mr. Hopkins, we had more homes. They didn't come in and inspect. Yeah, they just left. Say, "Oh, thank you." And you know . . .

HY: So Costa[']s Dairy became Hopkins' poultry farm?

LY: Poultry farm, mm hmm.

HY: Did he also own the dairy?

LY: No, that was Costa family—Portuguese family.

HY: Oh, oh, oh, I see.

LY: And Mr. Hopkins was a Caucasian man. I don't know where he came from, but he loved children. Oh, to me he was like Santa Claus. You know, he would say, "Oh, hello Too-tired." Tsutae, he can't say my Japanese name. Call me like I'm too tired. (Laughs) He'd pick me up, lift me up, and then when he delivers all his eggs. . . . Such a big farm that he would deliver daily to Hind-Clarke Dairy—there was a Hind-Clarke Dairy—he'd take all his eggs there and he says, "Come children, I'm taking you for a ride." He would take about three of us, and he'll deliver his eggs. Hind-Clarke Dairy had a little fountain there where they sell ice cream—homemade ice cream—and they were known for this. Delicious ice cream. He would buy us a cone, give all of us the ice cream. It was a treat for us. Then he's always, you know, big man with the big belly and always laughing and lifting us up, buy us the ice cream, take us home. "Here's a nickel for you, here's a nickel." He would give us a nickel each. (Laughs) Oh, he was such a nice man—jolly. Yeah, Hopkins' poultry farm.

HY: What do you remember about the day, December 7? Where were you?

LY: Oh, I was at the theater.

HY: Which theater?

LY: International (laughs). See, that's how devoted I was to my music. Every Sunday we would rehearse at the theater. And we were there. Before eight [A.M.], I'm there. And then I remember this Hawaiian fellow that worked at the theater, and he was also a performer with us—Sam[uel] Kapule. "What you kids doing over here?" You know, scolded.

And I said, "Why?"

He said, "There's no rehearsal today!"

"Why?" I said.

"Don't you know there's a war going on? And it's the Japanese that came, you know!"

And while he's talking to me outside, I could see puffs of smoke way up high, and every now and then you can see a tiny plane way up—shining, because the sun was out. And you can see the, what do you call it, these zero planes [Japanese planes] way up. And we don't know what is war. "What do you mean war?"

He said, "Go home! Go home! No more practice today! No more movies, no more nothing!"

So we said, "Wow, the terrible!"

And there's this girl that lived right on the lower street here—Kalo Lane [Place]. There was a Kalo Lane right across Varsity Theatre. She lived there and so. . . . Okay, we hopped on the—and there was another girl from McCully. So we got on the bus, and we said, "Okay, we go home." Those days we had trollies running. So when we reached. . . . Mary was the closest. Mary lived in McCully. So she said, "Come to my house." So like fools, the three of us went down, and we went to her house and then, as soon as we reached her house, the mother said—oh she seemed like, it was the end of the world, and fear written all over her face.

"Come in! Come in!" she says, "Why are you folks here? You better go home because there's a war on."

"Oh, wow!" we said.

"And you know the terrible part is they say it's Japan, so we're enemies now, you know."

And just as she's talking and explaining, boy there was a big explosion and the house just shook, and everything fell down. And when we look out the window, the whole block was on fire. And actually . . .

HY: What street was it on?

LY: Um, King Street. . . . Wait, Algaroba [Street], and uh wait, Algaroba and I don't know what

the other street was [Pumehana Street]. One block behind King. And, oh I'm. . . . You know that noise was so loud, and the fire outside was so intense. Everybody's with their hose. They want to hose their house so that the fire wouldn't. . . . But there's no water, hardly any water coming out. And there was a service station [McCully Service Station] across these people's house, and they were afraid that something's going to explode. Oh, I was so scared.

I said, "Let's go already!" You know, we ran out to King Street and we can still hear the explosion now and then, so we went one street above, above King Street which was Young Street. We start running towards Mō'ili'ili. Betty lived down here and I live Wai'alae. Ho, we're so scared and every time we hear a loud one, we just run under a tree or we crawl underneath and we stay still for a while and then. . . . Because everything came to a halt.

King Street, the fire by that time, you know—some of the stores were burning. In fact that whole block burned down. By the time I ran and I reached. . . . I go past here, I go beyond—you know where you come to Foodland where you have Kapahulu, Harding, and Wai'alae Avenue[s]?—little bit past there. And the bus came. I caught that bus. I went home, and of course my folks were worried.

HY: You ran all the way from McCully to . . .

LY: Yeah. Till up to there.

HY: Oh.

LY: And by then the bus came. So I jumped on the bus and went all the way to Wai'alae, and the bus terminal didn't go as far as my home. From there I have to walk. So I walked and I went home and I. . . . They were all worried, "What---where were you?"

I said, "Oh, you wouldn't believe. Oh! McCully there was. . . . I don't know who started it or what happened, but the whole block was burning."

And then from that night on it's blackout—you know the radio's on, no lights, you are not to go out, no. . . . Do not put on any lights. And then we went through all the process of painting our windows or buying shades. We all had to go to school and get our gas masks. We all carried gas masks during the war, and during the early part of the war . . .

HY: They were issued at school?

LY: Yeah, all for the whole family. Everybody carried a gas mask. And everything came down to rationing—the gasoline, food, certain appliances, needs for babies and things. Everything was sold in priority. You have to submit your name. Like if you were going to buy a refrigerator: "Why do you need this?" Now if you had a baby, well baby's milk has to be kept fresh. (Everything was dealt with priority.)

And then, slow, gradually you know, like. . . . Funny, yeah, even during the war, there's always somebody ingenious yeah (laughs) make blackout lights. You know for the car? Out of all the cars, traffic cannot come to a stop, so they have these blackout lights. You can't see from above, but for the driver, you have a little light where it helps for you to drive at night.

So, I don't know how long it was that we lived on the blackout December 7, I think at least half the year of the following year, 1942. [Total blackout became a dim-out in July 1942; all blackout regulations were lifted by July 1944.] And then, everything was on curfew. By eight o'clock, everybody has to be off the street something like that, I remember. You know, and I came—I put on so much weight, because you know, teenagers use a lot of energy. But you only in the house and you can't go out, but you get hungry, you going to eat. Oh that's the heaviest I got, during about three months after the war. And then, of course, I lost it all again. Holy cats! Everything was rationed . . .

HY: How did that affect your parent's farm?

LY: Oh, the feed, you know the chicken feed? That became a problem, too, because most of our feed and certain kind of food for the people were all brought in from the Mainland. And those days, nothing was air freighted into Hawai'i—all by ship. So the Matson [Navigation Company] lines take maybe seven—a week to a week and a half to get it here, but war materials are going to come first. That was top priority. So, sometimes, we don't have cooking oil. I remember my mother would always trade off some chickens and eggs for so much flour, so much oil. She likes to stock, and rice 'cause that's our staple food, yeah.

HY: Who would she trade with? With neighbors? Or with the store?

LY: No, with the store, yeah. And I guess, that's a age-old thing about trading. You know, what I have and you don't have, when times get rough, that's what they do. So everything was a trade-off. Shee.

HY: Did they continue to supply to Star Market and . . .

LY: Yeah. We were supplying Star Market until the early [19]50s. I was married and gone, but I know my brother used to deliver because when I come home for a visit, he said, "Oh, I got to go deliver," and he'll take it to Star Market.

HY: What about your egg delivery to neighbors? Did . . .

LY: Oh no, that stopped. Peddling stopped, yeah.

HY: Was that because of the war or was there . . .

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm. War and, you know, when gasoline was rationed, even going to the market stopped. You know, that open market at 'A'ala? Yeah, that stopped too.

And most of the eggs were marketed to the market. Forget what other—it was a Chinese market we used to take out to.

HY: Were you not allowed to go door-to-door with the eggs or . . .

LY: Oh, you could, but then we were older already and working. We didn't have time and the younger ones didn't want to do it, and I guess my folks never pushed. So, my brothers and I was the last. (Laughs)

Sometimes we got to 'A'ala Market on a Sunday. We have to get up at 4:30 [A.M.], load up the truck, and we'll go, and if there's leftover eggs coming home, right around here, my dad would stop and my brother and I would run out and we'd go knocking till we sell all the eggs on the way home. And they were cheap. The eggs were fifty cents a dozen for large eggs, but you always ask for a bowl because you have 'em in the basket, and you just count twelve if they want a dozen or two, but they're nice, fresh eggs, yeah. (Sighs).

HY: Did that financially affect your parents' business or did they do as well?

LY: They did all right. My father, see, at that time, was still contracting. He didn't stop contracting until, I think about '51, '50 or '51, when he fell off that roof. And he would go out to work with my—my brother would help him, my brother that was a mechanic. He would help him. When he would leave his job or on his day off he would help my dad, and my mom ran the farm by herself with all the kids helping.

HY: Did his contracting business change during the war at all?

LY: No, he became busier in a way.

HY: He became busier?

LY: Yeah, he came busier.

HY: What kinds of things was he asked to build?

LY: He built ranch homes in . . .

HY: Residential?

(LY bumps microphone.)

LY: . . . and he also did repair work for private homes. And he also used to build cabinets and different, simple furniture like dining table, and benches, and even chairs. So he was pretty talented. He used to make dressers, too, with the mirror and all. I took one with me, but I'm getting married to a furniture man [her husband's family owned the Yamada Furniture Store], right? So, your grandma [LY's mother-in-law] said, "When you come here, you don't have to bring anything, just bring your body." Bring my body. (Laughs)

But when I went back the second time, see—when I first got married, I lived with them [in-laws] for a year and then I became pregnant. And I told Uncle [HY's uncle, LY's husband], "I'll live with your folks' "—I didn't like the idea but I told him—"I'll live with them and help in the store, but if I became in a family way, you have to promise me, we're going to go out on our own."

He said, "Okay."

So when I became pregnant I said, "Oh, now we can live on our own." So he told his father that we were expecting. Oh, the father was happy.

And then he says, "But if I leave, I'm going to have an extra mouth to feed. So I can make a living on. . . ." He was making ninety cents an hour, I think.

HY: Working at the furniture store?

LY: Mm hmm. And when he asked for a raise, oh it became a big war. So he said, "Well, I'll just have to move out, I have to leave then."

Mom [LY's mother-in-law]—she was the one that was rough. "Yes! Get out!" So, we moved out, and we went back to Honolulu to live. We came back here, and we stayed here maybe two, going on three years when we were called back, so we went back. At that time I didn't want to go back. I told him, "I don't want to go back."

But he said, "I'll go first and I'll explain to them that we're not going to live together with them, because I went through enough already."

So he explained some of the things why I didn't want to live (with) them. 'Cause the older brother, ho, used to treat me like I was a second-class citizen.

I was probably extra sensitive, and I took it in too seriously. And I had this complex, too, you know, that they didn't like me because of my Okinawan ancestry.

So, I always had that feeling that they don't treat me the same. And your father would tell you. Because when I told him, "Tokio, you know, go get married and why don't you bring your wife here?"

And he said, "Lorraine, can you imagine? You just Okinawan and my mom said you're different. You're a different kind of person."

I said, "You're damn right I'm different, I'm better!" I told him.

(Laughter)

LY: He said, "So can you imagine if I brought a Caucasian wife?"

I said, "That's really too bad." So that was his decision that he would never bring your mom here.

HY: So you felt that they treated you differently because you were Okinawan?

LY: Oh, definitely! Definitely!

HY: What would they say?

LY: Oh, it's the way they talk, the way she look at me, follow me—"Be sure and wash that clean!" Or just little things.

HY: And yet they wanted you to stay?

LY: Yeah, and work in the store. That one year was the worst year, but I think it built character in me. I learned tolerance, yeah. So it wasn't all in vain. (Laughs) Yeah, I learned something good.

HY: Okay. I got to . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-109-2-93 and 22-110-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Loraine Yamada (LY)

September 23, 1993

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: The following is a continuation of an interview with Loraine Yamada, session number two.

When you were working at Kau-Kau . . .

LY: Korner.

HY: Korner. What do you remember about your coworkers?

LY: We were of mixed groups. And most of them were nice, except there was one Filipino—I think I told you—he called me a “public enemy number one.” And he said he was going to get me. (Laughs) You know, kind of threaten me. And I just said, “Oh you—” You know, the slang at that time for a Filipino was (*bayau*). We used to call 'em, you know. And I said, “Oh, you damn, ignorant (*bayau*)!” And they don't like that word. It's like calling a Japanese, “You Jap!” You know, something like that. So, that made him angry.

But, I hadn't seen him for a long time, and then he became a cab driver. I think I told you. I caught his cab one night, without realizing it. Yeah, and then . . .

HY: Was this during wartime? Or way . . .

LY: Right after the war, right after the war. Because I lived in the country, and the bus line would (end about a half mile from) my house. (That meant I have to walk.) I always worked night shift(s). So it's kind of frightening.

So when I reached—just before the bus line [ended]—I would get off, and the last cab stand was in Kaimukī. So, I would get off there, and then catch the cab so he can take me all the way home. And it happened to be Coloma, the Filipino guy (laughs), that we once fought in Kau-Kau Korner. But then he said, “You, Sue eh?” They used to call me Sue. My Japanese name is Tsutae, yeah. And whenever there's another Loraine, they always say, “Can we call you something else?” So, Sue. “You Sue, eh?” he goes.

And I said, “Yeah,” I said, “Oh, you Coloma?”

He said, “Yeah.”

And I said, "Oh, how's everything?" You know, I act like nothing.

"Oh, I marry now, you know. Me marry Japanese girl."

(Laughter)

LY: That's what he said (laughing). That was strange, but hu! If he was the type that had vengeance and unforgiving, maybe he would have poke me with the knife (laughs).

HY: So, that was the only problem you had with your coworkers?

LY: Yeah. Sometimes, very rarely, the *Haole* customers. And those days, were mostly defense workers and service people.

HY: Were there other Japanese waitresses or workers there?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm. Yeah, yeah. We all got along. As far as locally, you know, very rarely, we come across prejudice. I guess because it was always like that. The prejudice(d) ones are prejudice(d), whether we have war or not. I would say most of the people were the same. No change.

HY: How did you get your job working at Hickam [Field in the Officers' Club]?

LY: How did I? I went to apply. Then, was not so bad because that was right after the war. It was in 1947. The war ended in '45, and . . . No, in '46, I worked there. In '46 to '47. Just before I get married I quit.

I went to apply because most waitress jobs, they give you minimum wage. And those days was only like thirty, thirty-five cents. And because they think you going to depend on the tip. But you didn't have to report your tips, those days. But they said Hickam [Field] pays good. So, I went to the restaurant there, and I applied.

No, they had the office some place in town because it was contracted out with a private caterer, not caterer, but people that do that kind of business. And it was called uh, (sighs) they were big operators in Honolulu, now I can't even think of the name. I remember(ed) till about four, five years ago—(Spencecliff Corporation Ltd.).

Anyway, big operators, and he had the contract with Hickam. So, I went to (the) office in town, and I applied and I got the job. So, Hickam Air Force Base [Field] officers' dining room—that's where I worked. And then the hours. . . . I worked night shift 'cause I go to school. So, was from five to nine. Short hours, but good wages and good tips. Yeah, I applied for it. And those days, I think it's not like today where there's a law you got to hire certain amount of a certain ethnic group. [While the government does not have a quota system, they do have a stated policy of encouraging women and minorities to apply for jobs.] Today, it's like that—in government especially. But those days, they go strictly by your qualifications, which I think is better, no?

HY: What was the ethnicity of some of the coworkers?

LY: We had all. We had Blacks, we had *Haoles*, we had Japanese, I don't recall any Chinese at Hickam. But Hawaiian, *Haole*, and mostly the Blacks were in the kitchen. Yeah. Cooks or busboy, or something like that.

HY: And are the customers all military then?

LY: They('re) all military, and they're all officers. So, it made it kind of nice. Unless the officers brought in their families, or wives, or something, other than that, the regular enlisted men cannot come in. It's strictly for officers.

HY: How was the relationship with the workers and the customers there?

LY: You know, I don't recall any kind of prejudice. Once in a while you might find a cocky guy, but I think he would be cocky with anybody, whether you were Japanese or whatever. I don't think it was the race. But it was something. You have to have a pass, and every time you pass the entrance, you have to show your pass. [All workers were required to show their passes.]

And so there was an intelligence office, right near the dining room. I noticed because that was the—initially that's where the base was, I mean, where the planes come in (the terminal). (It was just a small office right there in the terminal. On one occasion we were called in for an investigation. A janitor was caught in the women's restroom peeping. We reported the incident. The Peeping Tom was apprehended, and about three of us workers had to go in to answer all questions.)

HY: I lost my train of thought. . . . Can you describe what the working conditions were like there?

LY: You know, it was better than the regular restaurants in—what you call?—in town, because they had their specific jobs. I don't know if it was because it was a military base, but some of the restaurants that I worked, we serve, we clear the tables. . . . There were no busboys. But over there, we had the busboys. We had the janitors that clean all the floors, see.

Back then when I worked, after the restaurant close, you sweep, you mop, we do everything. But over there, they had their specific job. The cooks, the pantry people that work only on salads and hors d'oeuvres and things like that. And the busboys—and what else we had?—the janitors, the bakers, yeah. So, it was kind of good. You don't have to do all those other things that we normally do when you work for a private firm in town. Even a nice restaurant, when you have time, you have to fill up the sugar bowls, make sure all the salt and pepper is there. . . . Certain time of the day, when the rush hour is over, you make sure the napkins are all filled up. Over there, we didn't have to do that, so was good.

HY: Specialized.

LY: Mm hmm, was good. Just like today.

HY: Was there a specific name for that restaurant? Or was it just the Hickam officers' restaurant?

LY: I think it was called that—Hickam Officers' Club dining room. Yeah.

HY: Now when the war started, your musical interests. . . . You had to change your activities. Can you explain what happened?

LY: Well, I was more—I love all kinds of music, but it just happened that in Japanese[-language] school I was always selected to take a role in whatever plays we have, and it's all done in Japanese, and singing. . . . I would be the star, so, you know, I tend to go more that way. And—but when the war started, you forget everything Japanese. You're not permitted to even speak. Wherever you go, it says, "Be American! Speak English!" That's the kind of sign all over the place.

So, I started to study music, and there was classical singing. So, that was the changing point.

HY: Was that why you decided to go to the music school, or what was it? The Hawai'i Institute of Technology?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm. Oh, that was afterwards. Before that, it was all private lessons because there was no music school in O'ahu. I took private lessons weekly—twice a week—from Rita Raymond. She was a former instructor at Carnegie Hall. Very well-known. And I studied with her for about two years, I think. And then, I studied with. . . . This man used to teach at his home in, out by Fort Ruger, near Fort Ruger, in Kaimukī. A great big house, and he was an opera singer. I never heard of him, but he was of Spanish origin. Joaquin Wanrell his name was. J-o-a-q-u-i-n W-a-n-r-e-l-l. Elderly man, but still, you can tell, yeah. Because these kind of singers, like Rita Raymond, too, she was in her seventies. She still can blast the voice, you know. Same thing with Professor Wanrell.

So, I studied with him for a short while, and then Hawai'i Institute of Technology opened, the music department. So, yeah, I went there two years. And over there, too, they had. . . . She still active I think in Honolulu, Ruth McKendric. And—gee, what was the piano teacher's name?—Ruth McKendric, and. . . . Rasmussen, piano teacher was Rasmussen. I can't think of her first name. . . . Gerda Rasmussen. She's the piano teacher.

HY: So your performances stopped—your Japanese-style singing?

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And then did you begin performing in English?

LY: (Yes.) I performed English while I was studying. And I think I told you, yeah? In English—During the war, see, hardly any entertainment except for the military entertainment. And mine kind of, not entirely stopped, but not as active like the Japanese one. But same time, when I was just going to Hawai'i Institute of Technology, the boys were all beginning to come home—the local boys that went to war. The war is over. And so then, they—You know, if you('re) from Hawai'i, you miss the Japanese music, you miss the Hawaiian music. American music, you hear it all the time. So, every party, every week, there was a welcome-home party, and we had to entertain.

HY: So, that's when you . . .

LY: Yeah. I went full back again, and then we started singing in the theaters again.

HY: When you did perform English songs, even though you slowed down some, where would you perform?

LY: Oh, I performed at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] (laughs), churches. . . . I performed several times at Honolulu Academy of Arts, and parties, too—going away parties. During the war, when they go away to war, yeah, they had farewell parties. Yeah. Those . . .

HY: Did you play in private homes or . . .

LY: Private homes or the teahouses. Those teahouses were always busy for parties.

HY: Did you sing with a group?

LY: No. Always solo.

HY: Solo?

LY: Mm hmm. Mostly solo. I might have just a guitar accompanist, or a pianist. That's all.

HY: And you also did some theater.

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

HY: Can you talk about that a little bit?

LY: Yeah. I was with this community theater group. And, oh, the director's name was Bob Wagner. So long ago. That was in 1945, around there I think. Anyway, I was the star in the program. See, so, now when I look, I may come across the clipping. And we're going to perform in the military bases, you know. And so, Mr. Wagner told me, "Oh, Loraine, you cannot ride in with all of us after we reach the gate because you're Japanese."

And I said, "Oh."

"But we can't put on the show if you don't go in because you're the star!"

(Laughs) My [character's] name was Lani, Lani the maid. So he said, "When we reach the gate, you have to get off the bus," because we travel in the bus, with all our equipment and everything, yeah.

HY: What base was this?

LY: Oh, we went to Pearl Harbor, Kāne'ohe Air Force Base [Kāne'ohe Naval Air Station]. I think we went Hickam [Field], too. And then, there's another one, Camp, Camp. . . . I think was called Catlin. On the way to Pearl Harbor. It's on the right-hand side. There was another air force base.

Anyway, we went to (all) the military base(s), and he said I have to ride on the. . . . If it's navy, you know, base, the SP [shore patrol] comes. You know, the jeep comes, yeah. And

they all have their [arm] band—SP.

HY: Oh, the MP?

LY: MP is military police, army one is MP. But navy's always SP. So, I have to ride with them, and then they take me to the—and they always fed us before we perform—so, take me to the dining room. I eat. And once I eat with the group, then I---we just go to the theater together. But to enter, I had to always be escorted by the SP. Like I('m) going (to) do something. (Laughs) Small potato(!) I going blow up the base! (Laughs) It's so funny, yeah? 'Cause I used to be so small! Only about ninety pounds! Shee. It's funny. Yeah.

HY: What was the name of the theater group?

LY: I think it was called Honolulu Community Theater Group. Yeah.

HY: Who were some of the other people that were. . . . Were you the only Japanese?

LY: Ho. Yeah, I was the only Japanese, and there was one Chinese. I forget his name though. No, two Chinese. In fact, one became a politician afterwards. His name was Wong, I think. Something Wong. And then we had another. I can't remember his name. He was a kind of like a technician in the back. Do the lights and the sound effects. Then we had couple of soldiers that were in the play, too. Something Ogilvie. And then we had couple of ladies from Pearl City area. Can't think of her name all ready. Rose, Rose something. Oh, if I find the clipping, maybe the names of the cast might be there.

HY: Was this theater group formed specifically to entertain the bases?

LY: Military. Yeah, I think so. Because that director was a military man.

HY: Oh, I see.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And was this unusual for Japanese to entertain on base?

LY: Oh, yeah. I never did see [other Japanese]. Maybe there was, but I didn't see.

HY: Were you affiliated with USO [United Service Organizations] as well?

LY: Uh uh, [no], only that. And then, if I sang at any group, I mean to entertain, the military. . . . See, lot of 'em was held at the YMCA.

HY: Is this the one on Richards Street?

LY: Yeah. That's the one. And I would sing by myself, with the piano. That's all. And all classical music.

HY: Oh, classical.

LY: Yeah. So, you know, I sang pop, I sang classical music, I sang country western. Was all kinds (laughs).

HY: So, your other entertaining, outside of this theater group, was also mostly for the military as well?

LY: Yeah, for a while. But when the boys started coming home, it was already early '46. In fact, from around. . . . The war with Japan ended in '45 of August. So, by the time they come in, usually, early '46.

So, from around then, I had done that thing already, that community play. I was back into singing Japanese songs. And then the orchestra started practicing again. So, it was nice. Till I got married, I sang with the orchestra.

HY: What about radio? Did . . .

LY: No Japanese program.

HY: Had you performed with [on the] radio prior to the war?

LY: Oh, yeah. Yes. Before the war, those days, we had only three. We had KGMB, KGU, and KPOA [began broadcasting in 1946]. Only those three stations. And I sang at all three, when they had the Japanese programs. And I think in the early [19]50s they asked me to sing. I was here [Hilo] already. So, on one trip that I went home, I sang on. . . . KPOA was popular with the Japanese program then. Oh, and then later on, KULA came in, K-U-L-A, with Japanese program. Today, they have plenty, but those days was limited. And very active. And we had the daily newspaper, too. *Hawai'i Hōchi*, and *Hawai'i*. . . . Oh, wait, wait, *Hawai'i Hōchi* and *Nippu Jiji*, it was called. (*Hawai'i Times* also.) [The] *Hawai'i Herald*, that went on even during the war. I'm sure it did because I remember my father reading the paper.

HY: Was that unusual, for people that were singing Japanese-style music, to turn to English singing and perform? Or were there other people that were doing that, too?

LY: You know, the only person that I know of that sang English songs, was. . . . You know that instructor now, Dick Aoyagi? Him. Because we studied almost under the same instructors. And he's a fine, classical singer. I don't know of any others that continued with English performance.

HY: Was Ethel Azama, was she . . .

LY: Oh, yeah. She came way after. She came after. And she was a jazz singer, yeah. Not Japanese singer, but she was an accomplished, jazz singer. But, did I tell you I met her mother in Maui?

HY: No. You met her mom?

LY: Yeah. And she came and introduced herself, and she started to cry. She said, "Because my daughter, Ethel and I, always used to follow you to listen to you sing."

I felt kind of flattered, and I said, "Oh! I thought she was a great singer," you know, I told the mom. And I said, "It's so sad that she had to die so young. What happened?"

And she told me, "Oh, she was sick."

She left, I think, two children. So, she said when she heard me, the tears just came, and she said she had to come and talk to me. I knew of Ethel, but I never met her personally. So, this was really something when the mother came to me, yeah in Maui. And that was in '87.

HY: So, you were at Hickam for about a year . . .

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And then, what happened after that?

LY: After that, I went on a Mainland trip to perform Japanese (show). Total, I mean, Japanese show. There were about eleven of us, I think.

HY: Who sponsored this trip?

LY: Matsuo [Brothers]. You know, I told you the brothers? Okay, he came back from the war. He was in the 100th Infantry [Battalion]. So, he came back to resume his profession in show business, because (he was) always the producer (in) their family.

HY: What's his first name?

LY: Fred.

HY: Fred.

LY: So, Fred said, "Okay, we going get back together." So we started practicing again, and we going to the Mainland. Before we went to the Mainland, we island hop(ped) every island and we performed. We got back, and we gave a big show in January of '47, in Honolulu. And then we gave a big, farewell performance at McKinley [High School] Auditorium. I don't know why it was at McKinley because they had a theater, International Theatre. But we performed at McKinley High School, and it was called, "The Farewell Performance Of Hawai'i Takarazuka Club." And then the Hilo Takarazuka joined us. And that's how I met Uncle [LY's husband].

Then, after that performance, we were scheduled to go Mainland. So, we went on a two-week tour of all the different districts in California, to perform for the people—Japanese people. They were all coming back from the camps. Yeah. And so, they had a hard life in the camps. And, so to see---We weren't the best performers because we're from Hawai'i. But they were so appreciative, yeah. Ho! So many of them just cried.

And one of my songs, was about the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team] and the 100th Infantry [Battalion] boys. I would sing---every performance, I sing that. I was requested to sing that song. And so, it's about the---actually, it's for all the Japanese boys, but in the lyrics it's, "We are the boys from Hawai'i Nei." So, was for the Hawai'i Japanese boys, yeah. But,

oh, that was always requested. So, every performance, I sang that song.

HY: Were the same people involved, postwar as they were prewar in your singing group then? Or was it a re-forming . . .

LY: This one was pretty much the same, I would say, but in the course of the years, I went to many different ones. Because before Fred [Matsuo] came back, I got involved with the orchestras now. With Fred, we never had a good orchestra. It was always a string---three-piece accompanists, maybe a mandolin, a guitar, and an ukulele [*'ukulele*]. And these are not the typical Japanese instruments, you know what I mean. And so, it's kind of discouraging, but I get to go places because he had all the ties. But the other orchestras . . .

HY: Like---can you name some of the . . .

LY: What is this? (LY points to newspaper.) Is this the *Hawai'i* . . .

HY: Yeah, I'll show you that.

LY: Okay. You know, get Urata, yeah? Harry Urata?

HY: I don't know if he's in there [newspaper].

LY: He does---he has it in every issue. He does the translation of all the Japanese songs [in the "*Karaoke Korner*" column of the *Hawai'i Pacific Press*], so he must be in here. Harry Urata. Wait eh.

HY: This one [article in *Hawai'i Pacific Press*], is a five-part series on these orchestras, mostly [about] Francis [Zanami, well-known orchestra leader in the thirties and forties].

LY: Eh, who is this? I cannot see. What's that? Ikehara?

HY: Yeah, [Seiko] Ikehara [a member of the Smile Orchestra].

LY: That's Okinawan, I think. Okay. See, like my sisters, used to dance, yeah. Them two. . . . Oh, here's Harry Urata. That's him. He has his own music studio [Urata Music Studio]. And he had an orchestra [Shinko Orchestra]. Maybe like eight-piece [orchestra]. So, he had the clarinet which would play the flute section of the Japanese song. He and the mandolin which was in almost, lot of Japanese songs. Guitar, bass, even had the drummer. And I joined his group, and I said. . . . Because, he was a teacher at Wai'alaie Japanese-[language] School---the school that I went to. So, I knew him already, eh, so it was easy. And then . . .

HY: What about some of the other orchestras?

LY: Yeah, I went with Nippon Orchestra, but I don't know if you have anything about Mr. [Akira] Takei in there. He performed for quite a number of years before he died. I sang with his orchestra for little while. And I don't know, I felt, yeah, the loyalty towards Mr. Matsuo, because he's the one that gave me the beginning in performing. So, even though he didn't have a good orchestra, you know, I always end up with them.

- HY: Did some of these orchestras play western-style, like big-band stuff? Or was it strictly Japanese?
- LY: Strictly Japanese. Yeah. Strictly. And then, I know already, just before I get married, or right after I got married, they had Bob [Robert] Kojima. He started his own, the Club Nisei Orchestra. Then had Chidori Orchestra, by another guy [Charlie Miura]. I forget his name now. And then had that Masaji Uyehara. He had his orchestra [Smile Orchestra, cofounded by Francis Zanami], too. I forget what his . . .
- HY: Is that the Smile . . .
- LY: Smile. Smile Cafe's boss [Sam Uyehara, brother of Masaji and the owner of Smile Cafe, became the Smile Orchestra's sponsor]. And he's an old-timer. And there was another guy . . . Fred, I think his name was, Kiyabu. Good pianist. Oh! When he played the Japanese songs on that piano. Oh! He was fabulous! So, I often wonder what ever happened to him. He was outstanding.
- HY: What happened to the theaters? What were they used for during the war, when you could no longer perform in, like say, the International Theatre? What were they used for, all those buildings?
- LY: Oh! They showed the English movie, and any other ethnic movie (laughs) except Japanese, Chinese . . .
- HY: So, movie houses.
- LY: Yeah, yeah. And then they tore it down. International Theatre, they tore it down, and they put up something else. You know, I don't know what it is today. But there was Tōyō Theatre, too. That was a Japanese theater, too. But see, Tōyō Theatre was, even in Japan they have. . . . In Hawai'i, it was always Royal Amusement[s Ltd.], had a collection of their own theaters, like Palace Theatre, Queen Theatre, King Theatre, Liberty Theatre, and some of the country theaters are all under Royal Amusement company.
- The other one was Consolidated Amusement Company, which is Princess Theatre, Hawai'i Theatre, Waikīkī Theatre. Tōyō Theatre was separate from International Theatre. So, International [Theatre] run by the Matsuo Brothers had another one called Park Theatre, right by 'A'ala Park. That was the older theater, like a rattrap. But every time we had a live performance, there would be a line. And International Theatre was a nice theater—real nice. But they tore it down, I know, and they rebuilt it. But I don't know what it is today. Maybe it's still there, I'm not sure.
- HY: How did. . . . I know you talked a little bit about your folks during the war, and you had some difficulty getting supplies, and that sort of thing.
- LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.
- HY: How did that impact on your family life?
- LY: Well, I grew up on the farm. So, in a way, to me it was a blessing. Times were hard for

many of us, but being on the farm. . . . You know, the old barter system comes into the picture. The peddlers come around because we live in the rural area. They come and they peddle groceries, fish, tofu [*tofu*]. A man just delivers tofu, I mean sells tofu. And . . .

HY: Would come door-to-door?

LY: He would come up the road and toot his horn. They all come out to buy tofu. Then, today [the next day] is the fisherman. (LY imitates horn sound.) We know it's the fisherman. They all come and buy fish. So, and then the markets. The little grocery stores would come calling in the houses to take your order. Okay, "How many cans of tuna you need? Oh, one gallon of oil. Okay, five pounds of flour." Like that. And then, he'd take it back, and somebody else would deliver it. Was like that.

So, when things (be)came rough, lot of things were rationed. Even sugar was rationed. [While the neighbor islands experienced brief periods of food rationing, there was no territory-wide food rationing. However, many instances of food shortages occurred.] But living on a farm, you know, you can exchange with fresh eggs. The chickens---you kill 'em, and clean 'em, and you can exchange, see. So, it worked out fine.

HY: Did your family also peddle some of their goods in the same way that, like say the tofu . . .

LY: No. But we did go to the open market on 'A'ala. They still have those markets. All that open market. We used to go there every Sunday.

HY: But were you able to do that during the war, still?

LY: I think so. I think the market ran during the war. But not as early because we had blackout, yeah. You('re) not permitted to drive with lights until the war ended. So . . .

HY: How was it that you managed to work nighttime?

LY: Well, in the beginning, maybe for the first six months or so, nobody was allowed to go out at night. [Curfew was from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. and was extended to 10 P.M. in May 1942.] But slowly they lifted, and every place you go, even Kau-Kau Korner---the whole restaurant is blacked out. You walk inside. . . . The cars, up until eight o'clock. [The curfew on automobiles was extended to 8 P.M. in September 1942 and to 10 P.M. three months later.] The automobiles were installed with certain kind of blackout lights. Where the small light, you can just see in the front. That, and then. . . . Curfew, after ten [P.M.], nobody is out till, gee, I don't know, till about 1943, [curfew was lifted on July 7, 1945] I think was like that.

But you had special pass if you work at night. You got to make sure you have your pass in case a police officer stops you.

HY: So, you working with a pass?

LY: Yeah. Yeah.

HY: Oh, I see.

LY: All night workers have that. And that, eventually, was lifted, too.

HY: What about your social life during that time?

LY: (Sighs) Everything is done during the day. You know, like school dances, was always held during the day. All the socials concerning school was held during the day. Quite a difference, you know, that time, yeah, during the war especially.

HY: Think we need to flip this over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Now when you got married, you moved to Hilo.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: And began working in the Yamada Furniture Store.

LY: Mm hmm.

HY: What do you---do you know what happened to the furniture store during the war?

LY: Oh, yes. It was terrible. Ships weren't coming in with the goods. And so, it was very interesting. Uncle [LY's husband] told me all this. He said they had no furniture to sell. Whole store is empty! But luckily they had the equipment---the machinery to manufacture mattresses. So, what they did was---they would only manufacture mattress(es), but then they need(ed) the ticking, the fabric for the mattress. They need(ed) the cotton which comes in from Texas. And so, only on priority basis---and which is kind of low on the list---would they get their supplies. Then, they don't know what to do. So, for a while. . . Lot of babies were being (laughs) born. No more cribs. So, they made their own cribs, and they would sell it.

Then they made nothing but pillows because a whole group of marines and infantry men came to this island to train. And the marines were all stationed in, he [LY's husband] said, Waimea [Camp Tarawa]. The store from the floor (up) to the ceiling was nothing but pillows. And they would deliver all the pillows to the army installations, here and there. That's how they made their living: with the cotton mattress(es) and the cotton pillows. And for the longest time during the war, that's how they lived, you know. Amazing! (Laughs) Make their own, what you call, cribs.

HY: When were they able to start getting supplies then?

LY: Well, Uncle told me when he was training in 1944 in Texas, one day when he went on leave, he saw this cotton factory. So, he went and he got all the information. He sent it to Uncle Toshi, and told him go make contact. And then they sent the bale out over here. And that was in 1944. And the war was still bad, you know, in the Pacific. So, there're military men all

over, even where I lived, Wai'ala'e. They had the artillery installation in Koko Head, the big searchlights. Hu! I tell you.

Wherever you go, you see soldiers, sailors, marines. Oh, yeah, of course, we were under martial law for a while. Then, it wasn't in effect too long. It was lifted, but when it first---the war first started, Hawai'i was under martial law.

HY: So, the furniture store survived by making mattresses and pillows. When were they able to start selling furniture?

LY: I think it was around---slowly things started coming in around 1946, early '46.

HY: Where did they get their supply---where did they get their furniture from?

LY: Mainly from the West Coast---Washington, Oregon, California. And they had some from---where was that now?---some of the high-quality manufacturers of living room set came from, I think North Carolina. They had to stop eventually. This is only about what, fifteen years ago maybe. Or twenty years ago. It became so expensive, freight and all, yeah, that they stopped. That's the Kroehler Company. Then, see, my living room set, that's Kroehler. Nowadays, hard to get.

HY: Was it primarily the shipping the problem then, that they weren't able to get furniture? Or were there restrictions?

LY: Shipping, and I think they had a whole---everything. The military came first. And other than food, other commodities, you know, would be secondary. So, was slow. And those days, everything's by ship. No freight is to come in by air like today. You know, all the food's shipped by air so then you get the fruits fresh. Gee, by time you get the apple, probably half of the box you got to throw it away. Onions, potatoes, yeah. Everything was imported. And the ships---on ship, it used to take at least around---what?---five to seven days.

But so many things are better today. So much improvement. And gradually, they go by priority. I remember when the merchandise starting coming in, like appliances---automobiles are almost probably the last, other than trucks and stuff like that. But appliances---all refrigerators, you have to submit your name and wait. People with babies or [the] elderly comes first. And the normal---the regular people got to wait. They go on priority.

So, they ask you all these questions when you go to shop. Nylons for---eh, you couldn't get. All rayon stockings. The water wet you, that mark stays on all day (laughs) like you get some kind of disease. No more hosiery. Those things came way later 'cause they're considered luxury, eh. Food first, medicine, things like that. But by 1945, slowly it was getting better, although the Pacific war never end(ed) till August of '45. By '46 gradually you can see the change in the merchandise in the store. And by '47, pretty good.

HY: When you started working at the furniture store, what duties did you have?

LY: First, they told me to sew mattress covers. It's just a simple box that you sew. One after another, you sew that. Then they stuff cotton in there, and they sew the sides. And then with the machinery, they do the rest. Then I sewed cushion covers. And if they short of---they

would call me---they need another salesman. So, I would run down [Yamada Furniture Store located downstairs, living quarters located upstairs]. I used to get nervous because I never did that kind sales work. But then, ho. I began to like it. So, after that, every time, "Lorraine!" (Laughs) "Come down! Come downstairs!"

HY: Was it only family-run? Or did they hire outside [of the family]?

LY: Yeah. At that time, the only outsider was one girl and one boy. The girl that worked in the office, and one salesman. Aye! (LY leaves to answer the door.)

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: I think you were describing your duties. . . .

LY: Oh, okay. I sell, yeah I do sales and . . .

HY: Oh, I know. You were talking about the two non-family members.

LY: Oh, yeah. We had one outside salesman, and one office girl. And was all family, other than that. Then later on, they hired one delivery boy to help. And by the time 1970 came along, gee, we must've had four delivery boys, two outside salesmen, about three office girls. So, things grew like the present condition. Lot of change.

HY: When the---after the war ended then, I assume they would quit supplying the military.

LY: The military, yeah.

HY: How did that affect their situation economically?

LY: Nothing. By then, the merchandise starting coming in, and everybody was waiting for furniture. So . . .

HY: Local? All local people?

LY: Yeah, they just. . . . People that get married, for instance, they want a bedroom set. They didn't have. So, ho, the market was there, and they all had money because nothing to spend [money on during the war]. So, was good yeah. They did well. In fact, in nineteen---wait '47 we got married, then after living here one year, we moved to Honolulu, and we came back in 1951 . . .

(Phone rings.)

LY: Excuse me.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

LY: Before the war, nice, beautiful, Japanese furniture. And that came to a halt. I don't think we've had Japanese furniture since. You know the kind where you go to Shirokiya [department store in Honolulu], you see? With that mirror that swings, so that when you wear

kimono, you can see, you know.

HY: They used to sell that?

LY: Yeah.

HY: The Yamada Furniture Store.

LY: Mm hmm, yeah. *Ojitchan* [LY's father-in-law, HY's grandfather] used to order all those Japanese . . .

HY: From Japan?

LY: Yeah. The mirror-type, and then Japanese, they call it *tansu*, which is tall drawers. And the small drawers on the top, then you have the big drawers right in the middle, and then some more small drawers on the bottom, and then like a little closet on the side. Oh! So, you can put your *futon* in there. Nice, Japanese furniture. And what else they had?

Yamada's, [Yamada Furniture Store] pretty much carried complete, yeah. Furniture for the whole house—living room, bedroom, dining room, juvenile furniture, baby furniture. They even used to sell wheeled goods like tricycles, and bicycles, gym sets for the kids, ironing boards, stools—and what else?—carpets . . .

HY: Appliances?

LY: Drapes. Appliance came little later. Oh, the only thing they used to sell was gas and electric range. But after they went to this present store, they thought to make it complete household furnishings and appliances. Uncle Masao [LY's husband] started the business with appliance, see.

HY: When did they [Yamada Furniture Store] move to that current place [340 Kino'ole Street]?

LY: Nineteen seventy.

HY: Oh, okay.

LY: So, it's only twenty, twenty-three years.

HY: I'll just backtrack a little bit. In '46, was the old furniture store---was located Downtown, yeah?

LY: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

HY: What street was . . .

LY: Kīlauea Avenue.

HY: Kīlauea Avenue.

LY: It's the present---it's a Chinese restaurant now. And it still belongs to Yamada Furniture [Store]. In '46, yeah, was over there . . .

HY: They rented it?

LY: They rent out. It's such a big building that they store all their things in the back, plus living quarters upstairs. That's how big it is. And banquet room upstairs, too. And I think we were the first store in Hilo to install an elevator. Yeah. I think even today no more---I don't know of any other [furniture] store that has an elevator because it's all one floor.

HY: What's the name of the Chinese restaurant that's there?

LY: Mun Cheong Lau. Yeah. And then in '56. . . . See, '46 it was an older store. Just a The warehouse was---they built the warehouse first with concrete so that it would be solid, because lot of termites. And then, the front section was the store. And in 1946, it was really an old-fashioned, wooden building. Nothing, I mean ugly store. And the whole family lived upstairs. Your dad [LY's brother-in-law], too, lived upstairs.

See, I came here in '47. They still lived in that old store. And in 1956, they tore down that store. Temporarily, they operated the store at another site. And they tore down that store, and they built this store [where Mun Cheong Lau is located] that's existing now. That was in 1956.

And in the meantime, they were negotiating because every time when we had a tidal wave warning, ho. We had to move all the furniture, because the water did come in, in 1960 when we had that last big tidal wave. So, they were negotiating, looking around for another property. And they bought that property that the store is on now [340 Kino'ole Street]. And in 1970, we had the grand opening over there, so. That store is twenty-three years old. But the other one that we opened in '56, on Kīlauea Avenue, we had the grand opening for that one. Oh! That was a nice store. Big, and *Ojitchan* was alive then, yeah, so he was happy. But when we opened this other one, he was gone, but *Obaban* went for the grand opening.

HY: Did that---did the store sustain any damage in the '46 tsunami?

LY: No. In the '60 tsunami, yeah. Lucky, oh, I tell you, they so lucky. We went down because no electricity. You know, when the tidal wave struck, we didn't have electricity for about a week I think. And . . .

HY: This is in '60?

LY: Yeah. And then Uncle said, "Oh! I better go down to the store."

I said, "I got to go, too, because I have to go get milk for the kids." Early in the morning. So, I took the baby, and Uncle and I went down. My goodness! And when we reached down---We could get to Yamada Furniture Store, but there's another block of buildings. Oh! The buildings. . . . Things are all in the middle of the street, you know. You can go to Yamada Furniture Store, but beyond that, you see another building right in the middle of the street.

And so, we went to the store, and I said, "Wow! Look at that!" Get somebody's slipper, and there's some fish on the street. And then you look across the street, you see all the stores intact. The facing of the store is all intact. So, Uncle opened the store, but you can see the water, yeah. And all that silt from the ocean, the fine sand, and it's not white like O'ahu's beaches. Over here, it's all black. All that. And next door is a bar. Water had gone all into their bar. And they were moving everything. When we opened our store, you can see the water mark that went in, but not all the way in. Just so lucky! So, Uncle said, "Wait, yeah Loraine. You wait over here." And he ran across the street. There's small alleys that you can go to the backside of the store. So, he went, and he said, "Oh! I can't go home. I got to help these people." All the buildings were piled up. The facing looks all right, but the back was all piled up (with other buildings and people's belongings).

So, he took his truck. He went to each place. And all the trucks. . . . The store was closed. They all helping everybody, yeah, those that need(ed) to have their things moved because the store is damaged. Lot of dry good[s] stores. Every stream in the parks, in the valleys, you see people rinsing. That—you know that fine sand that gets into your clothes like this? You know, if you have a cuff like this, you see all that sand in there. Because I brought couple of my friends' things home to help them rinse it all out. You have the water running constantly in the big tub, and just keep doing this—getting the sand out then you dry it, and then you take it back. And these are the personal things that belonged to my friends. But the people that were in business, you know, all the yard goods. So, they have an after-tidal wave sale. And it was chaos for about, gee, over a week.

The front street [Kamehameha Avenue], no buildings. All smashed and gone. Even the parking meters that's like this (pounds the table), everything was down like this. All like this. You know, I tell you, you can't imagine, and it was off-limits to everybody, but because we were helping, they give you this special pass yeah, from civil defense. And I could go in because Uncle them all drove the trucks to help the different merchants.

Oh, was really something, but Yamada Furniture Store was so lucky. Nothing was damaged! Only the floor, yeah, little bit. But you just sweep it out and mop it, and it was fine. But in front of the store, in front the door, we found fish, slippers, and some of the wooden kegs that carried shoyu. They used to import shoyu in kegs, you know, that come tumbling out from whatever that the waves destroyed. So, was smelly, yeah, afterwards. Because there were some dead bodies that they couldn't locate for a few days. But that was all after the war. Funny. I couldn't remember ever having tidal wave(s) while I was growing up.

HY: And then '46, they had no damage?

LY: They did. Mainly was on the other side. (There was major damage in Hilo. Many sections, residences and businesses were completely washed away.) Along the highway---the coastal highway.

HY: Oh.

LY: Laupāhoehoe.

HY: But, I mean, the furniture store?

LY: Furniture was okay.

HY: Yeah.

LY: 'Cause I know we came to perform to raise money—relief fund for tidal wave victims in '46. And that tidal wave struck April 1—April Fools' Day. People didn't take it seriously in the beginning, but that was really, very, very sad thing that happened, yeah. So many lives was lost, especially at Laupāhoehoe—100—something children and teachers. Oh! 'Cause I guess we never had that kind of, you know, in our lifetime till then. And that destruction was really something.

So, Hilo, one section was all wiped out, and another section was wiped out in 1960. But luckily the furniture store—that old, junk building withstood everything. Amazing.

HY: What happened to your singing career then when you got married, and moved to Hilo?

LY: Oh, just limited. The first year, I had no children, so, I sang with this group.

But during the day, I got to work. And the old folks hate when you play or have fun. They made sure you know it. (Laughs) So, only on Sundays I would go to this—they were called Yamamoto's—go to their house, and we would practice for about a couple of hours. And then we would sing over the radio. But *Ojitchan* liked me to sing, see. He always tell me to sing, sing, you know. So, I would sing, and whenever there were Japanese performers that came from Japan, he made sure that I go and see it. That part, he was really good to me. (Laughs) I was lucky. So, I could do that, and I sing with these people, but after one year we moved back to Honolulu. And then . . .

HY: Why did you move back to Honolulu?

LY: Because I became *hāpai*. And *Obaban* said when Uncle asked them for a raise—because now we're going to live on our own.

HY: Oh, that's right.

LY: We couldn't survive on less than a dollar. He was only getting seventy cents an hour. And so, when we figure—even if he made ninety cents, we couldn't make a go. Buy our food, and pay for the mortgage, and the utilities and so forth. So, he said that I have no choice, I have to work. So we left. We went Honolulu.

HY: What did you do in Honolulu?

LY: (Sighs) I stayed home because I was pregnant, but. . . .

HY: With your folks?

LY: Yeah. My folks took us in. And he and the unemployment was at, oh, at it's peak that time.

HY: Oh yeah?

LY: Mm hmm. He went to the unemployment office, and every week he has to go and report, yeah. No jobs, no jobs. So, he was selling Fuller Brush. He became a Fuller Brush salesman. House-to-house kind. And he was a good salesman. But nothing like having a job where he can go to every day.

My brother's friend was in charge of repairing furniture at Sand Island for the military. So, he said, "Oh you know, I can hire your brother-in-law." So, Uncle Masao worked there for about, let's see. . . . In the meantime, he had applied for job, but he worked there over one year I think. And he would catch the ferry every morning, and then go to Sand Island. Work there until 3:30 [P.M.]. So, he would be coming home early, and he started at seven [A.M.]. So, he leave home at five because we lived in Wai'ala'e, and that's so country and far those days. Not like today, with the freeway and all.

So, he'd go to work. And meantime he had applied as a—something to do with furniture. And then he got the job with [The] Pacific Company [Ltd.] that used to be wholesalers of furniture. And they had good selection furniture like Kroehler, Beautyrest, L.A. Period. All the kind that we sold at the store here. So, he became a rep [representative] for Pacific Company. He'd go call on all the furniture stores, the big, the small. And doing that, he learned a lot, he said.

So, when Tatsuo [Yamada, LY's brother-in-law] called him back, "We getting hard time at the store, and nothing like family. So, why don't you come back?" (Oh, Masao) was so happy, and I was so unhappy! (Laughs) I didn't want to go back. And I said, "I don't want to go back. I don't like the kind of treatment they gave me."

And he said, "Oh no, things going be different."

I said, "How can it be different? I'm still the same. They didn't like me."

And he said, "I'll go first, and I'm going to explain," to the parents, what I went through, you know. So, he went first. And they said that, oh, I didn't have to live with them, and he'll match the wages he was getting over there, and. . . .

HY: What were the wages?

LY: Two-hundred seventy-five dollars a month. And we had---by that time, we had two children. I just came home from the hospital with the second child when Tatsuo called. And, oh, for a while, that's the only time I seriously thought I would divorce him. Because I know I wouldn't be happy if I came back here. And then, he came back and talked to the old folks.

And, see, my father-in-law used to write me letters all the time. I write in Japanese just to let him know how Uncle was, and how the---to keep him in touch with his family. And he always wrote me nice letters. He (was) happy because I could write Japanese. When my mother[-in-law], *Obaban*, I don't think she liked me until the year she died. (Laughs) Her feelings kind of changed, but, you know, she was always so cold.

But anyhow, Uncle came home first, and then about a month later, I followed, and I came home over here. And it was pretty good because we live(ed) apart [from LY's in-laws]. Somebody came [to the door]?

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

HY: When you came back to Hilo then, did you work in the store?

LY: Yeah. Not right away. I came back in '51 of June.

HY: When you started working back at the store, did you do the same things?

LY: Yeah, pretty much. Except that now we were into drapes. So, I was sewing drapes from home because I had two children. I lived in town. See, we didn't build this house till 1957.

HY: So, you had a total of six kids, right?

LY: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

HY: And what about singing?

LY: Even singing. I hardly did. . . . You know, the period from 1951, when I came back till, I must have sung till about, oh, maybe ten years. Maybe till around '61. The only place I sang was in church for weddings when they asked me. Other than that, occasionally on the radio. I hardly sang because it meant I have to ask somebody to accompany me on the piano, and then. . . . So busy taking care of the kids, yeah. Hard. So, the only place I sang was in church. But I know the song already, all the wedding songs. So, all I do is take my sheet [music], and give it to the accompanist. Yeah, every church had an organist. So, I can sing. Then I get paid for it. So, that was good (laughs). That's the only kind of singing I did until *karaoke*.

HY: And can you talk a little bit [about] when you managed your daughter's band?

LY: Oh, yeah. That was in. . . . She started singing around her sophomore year. And . . .

HY: In high school?

LY: Mm hmm. In high school. And she went—her first year in college. . . . I know she didn't like to go school, but I told her, "No, education is important." So, she went, and that's the first *F* she got in her life, in history. And I remember, she wouldn't come out of the room. She just cried and cried, and cried (laughs). And when she told me, I had to laugh. I said, "That's nothing!"

She said, "Oh, you know."

And I said, "Yeah, and I know you don't like to go to school. When it comes to college, Joy [LY's daughter], it's not free. We have to pay for it. So, if you don't want to go, until you really know what you want, why don't you just rest? Just go work."

And she said okay, she wants to sing. So, she worked in the music store, and then weekends she sang. Weekend band—school band. So, from her sophomore year, she first started singing. And I'm busy working, too. I don't really pay attention. And one day she told me, "Mom, you know, why don't you come and hear me sing?" She's going to sing at the school

program or something. But I'm so busy because I used to work about sixteen hours a day.

HY: At the music store?

LY: Music store. I managed . . .

HY: What was the name of the . . .

LY: House of Music. So, I wouldn't go, but then I said, "Go tape it." You know, and then she'll tape it. She bring it home, and I said, "Mm, not bad. Not bad." All rock and roll, eh.

So, anyhow. . . . Then she performed at this big wedding in the hotel. So, she told me to come. So, I went. It's near where I work. Right across the street. I went and I listened. Mm, the band is good, too, you know. They were all young kids. And kind of big band. Had the keyboard, and they had a saxophone player, (a) trumpet player, a trombone player, drummer, bass. So, six, yeah, six pieces. Six-piece band plus had three singers. Joy was the only female, and the rest were all male vocalists. And they were good. So I said, "You know, you folks are good!"

Then, okay, she went to her junior year, came her senior year. And they had jobs every week. She was just like me. Every weekend, they performing some place. Wedding, graduation, because they were a good band. Then when she went to [her] first year [of] college, she wasn't interested after the first semester. But I said, "No, you finish the first year."

So, anyway, one night she said, "Oh mom, we had a meeting. And we're all serious about our music. And then, we were wondering if you want to manage our band?"

I said, "Heh?" (Laughs)

She said, "Yeah, we're serious."

I said, "Well. . . ." And by this time, I had quit my job. That store was sold, and I didn't like the new manager, and he didn't like me. So, I left. And I said, "But, you know, if you folks going to go into music, and you going make me the manager, you folks better listen because I going be strict."

And they said, "Yeah." So, I started booking them for the different parties. And then . . .

HY: What's the name of the band?

LY: Sky Odyssey. So, we made a demo tape, and it came out good. *Bumbai* I let you hear it. I took the tape to Honolulu, and went to the different agencies, and I got them to audition the band. And they got the job. So, on 1978, Labor Day weekend, we moved to Honolulu—all the band members. And they had the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. And we went on TV. We just arrived there. The band [went] straight to HIC [Honolulu International Center], and they performed over there. And then I had to go in advance, find a house where we can stay. So, from there we went to the house, and then we had to audition for the different hotels, different nightclubs. And our first job was with, was not Hawaiian Hut [Theater Restaurant].

Our first job was, oh, with the Telethon, and then we had to go to C'est Si Bon. There was a nightclub. We had to audition over there, and there were other bands for the job to perform at Da Sting, which was a well-known nightclub, disco nightclub.

So, there's three bands all auditioning for this position, and they chose us. So, we had a job right away. We were lucky. Ho! But they didn't like our selections. We were into different type of music. They said you got to do disco. Disco was the thing. And you know that beat (imitates disco beat), constant. We had to go get all the records, and practice all day, and learn the new songs.

The boss liked our band so much. He was so impressed with their energy, their—what you call that?—effort, and their modesty also because they were good kids. They (were) all young. One was only seventeen. He just graduated high school, but he wasn't eighteen yet. So, dealing with this kind young kids, ho, was hard. All the different personalities. But because the boss liked this band so much, and he said he really had faith in this band. So, anything that I thought would be good for the band, he gave us 100 percent support. He never did that for any other band, and it was a . . .

HY: What's his name?

LY: Fred Hirayama [general manager for Da Sting]. He ran for office, and he got in. [Fred Hirayama served as a state house representative in 1989–1990 for the Hawai'i Kai district. He lost the election in 1991.] And I think he lost this last second time or something, four years ago. From 'Āina Haina side, I think, he was. But that nightclub closed since it was at Waikīkī, Princess Ka'iulani Hotel. And that [Da Sting] nightclub closed in 1980, '80 or '81, I think. And I tell you, we used to just pack the place. And there were one, two, three bars going in all the time. By the time our contract finished, we went to Alaska. One year later we went to Alaska. We came back, I couldn't believe only had one bar. Hardly anybody inside. That's how business drastically changed. Because after we left Da Sting, the longest about three-months contract. We perform in lot of nightclubs in Honolulu, plus we went to Kaua'i, we went to Maui, and we came here to perform, too, before we went Alaska and Mainland.

HY: I think I'm running out of tape here.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-110-2-93; SIDE ONE

HY: What year did they disband then?

LY: In 1982.

HY: Eighty-two. Okay. Can you talk about your activity since then? You retired?

LY: Oh, I retired, and I just did part-time work. And by then, you know, Uncle wasn't well, and he worked only half a day. So, was just like his maid and servant until in 1988, I went to Kona to work. And this was entirely different field for me, too, because I never did hotel

work. But luckily because I could speak Japanese, and write Japanese, I got the position. And I would still be there, probably, if Uncle didn't get sick. But . . .

HY: And you're starting to sing? You're still singing?

LY: Mm hmm. I started back singing in '88---early '88. I nearly gave up because, oh, just---all the years that I didn't sing, oh, it's so obvious. The range is limited, my breath control was bad. I thought, and yet, when I listen to the *karaoke* music, it's all professional musicians. Ho! That's what I always wanted to sing with a good band, and I couldn't do it. But, you know, it just. . . . The practice, the usage of your vocal chords, gradually---and even now, I'm not satisfied. But it's (a lot) better than what it was. So, I'm satisfied, I'm happy.

Yeah. So, now we sing for parties, too. And we perform here and there. Last month, no July---end of July we performed at [Hawai'i] Naniloa [Hotel], Crown Room because it was the Statewide Annual *Karaoke* Festival, they call it. (Each island is represented)---the selected thirty. So, I sang for that one. And next month, I go Honolulu, I told you. And then December, we go to Kona, to the Senior Center, you know, Senior Citizen Program. Oh, you get to perform lot of times. Plus we have our own *karaoke* club. The one Henry is in, his brother, his sister-in-law, Carol---my friend that called little while ago. There's twelve of us. We decided that we (are) not going to have more than twelve, but Uncle Masao died, and another senior moved to Honolulu. So, there's ten of us left. And when I went to work Kona, they all kind of got lazy. They don't practice. But then when I came back, I'm busy taking care of Uncle, yeah. So, only now we (are) getting back into the swing of things. So, I just told them that it's no use only practice, and we don't do something about it. So we either get serious, or we only get together when we can. They all want to do something.

HY: Did any of your kids. . . . Were they interested in Japanese music?

LY: No. They always English, American. Yeah.

HY: Your daughter's band, the Sky Odyssey band, was that influenced at all by Japanese-style music? Or was it just their costumes?

LY: She was . . .

HY: Was all rock and roll?

LY: Yeah, but the boss at Da Sting, I told you, was so impressed with them. He wanted a different kind of band, you know. And I did mention to him one time that my thing is. . . . This band (is) going be little bit different. They('ve) got to wear costume(s). And I wanted to have the Japanese costume, I wanted to have the Okinawan costume, I wanted to have them with the Hawaiian costume. And they going play disco. I mean, well, I had the shock of my life because I came home, I had to come home every third week because I was secretary to my bowling league. And I have to make all the assignment for the lanes, and then collect the money. So, I would come home once a month to do that. When I went back, he said, "You going get the surprise, you know, Mrs. Yamada. Go come back."

Okay. So, I tell you. He hired the seamstress. And sewed all this *kabuki* costumes. I mean, oh, with the wig and all. And they had to go to University [of Hawai'i-Mānoa], learn how to

apply the makeup. You know, with the big brows and the white hair. I tell you, was something. So, they all dressed in their Japanese kimono with the big skirt. And then Joy had her kimono and her Japanese wig. So, what happened is, constantly music going in the disco house. When we—the live band goes out, the DJ [disc jockey] takes over and just slides right in with the music. So, unending. The dances go on.

So, that particular night, the music portion stopped, and then the DJ says, “And now,” and, (imitates drum sound) like that. All the lights go out. Are you familiar with *2001: A Space Odyssey*? The music? (LY sings the tune). You know, go like that. And he says, and he wrote this thing out. And he goes, “From outer space, introduce. . . .” He makes it real dramatic, see. “Comes, Sky, Odyssey!” (HY laughs). And dark, but you can. . . . They going march out. The drummer come(s) out. But he’s playing the weird *2001: A Space Odyssey* music, and they (are) coming out. And then they all go into their place. And then slowly they pick up their instrument, and then they (start) playing. And then all of a sudden—(makes drum noise), they play like this, and the lights come on. All flashing, and (the crowd see) them! (Laughs)

We came on TV, you know—what’s that program? That guy used to do it every week. “Hawaiian Host . . .”

HY: Oh, “Hawaiian Moving Company”?

LY: Local, yeah, we appeared on that years back. So, he came. They came with all the TV crew, and took them performing all in their outfit, and some of them so ugly. And we had a fabulous keyboard player. He even had his big organ over there. You know, that old, I forget what it’s called. He had that organ, he had the synthesizer, he had his keyboard, he had his clavinet. So, he’s going to du, du, du, du, oh like this. And with his hair—and his (wig) was straight hair, and every now and then he has something like this. He press it like this, and the hairs go, poop! And come(s) down. And I tell you, so funny. And the *Haole* boy—I had one *Haole* boy. Trumpet player, he had the white wig.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

LY: You know, the guys with the long cape. And Joy had one just like a harem-kind. Long pants. This is big band, and big sleeves. We were known as the costume disco band. Was really colorful. And, gee, how many years we were on the road? From the time we left, end of ’78, and we came home in ’82. And everybody went on their own way. But let’s see, one boy is teaching guitar now. He went on to study music, and he became outstanding. And his name appeared on the national *Guitar* magazine. That’s how well he did. And two of the boys play at the hotels in Waikoloa. One became DJ at the FM station. The *Haole* boy, I don’t know. I’m sure. . . . He was always very—what you call?—ambitious. So, I’m sure he’s still playing music. And the piano player—the keyboard player quit, and he got married. And today hard to get jobs with a live band. And I heard he’s driving a truck. It’s a waste because if anything, he was the most talented. Ho! He was a good player. Duane Higa.

HY: Anything else you’d like to add?

LY: To me, music is an international language. And talk about—what you call?—prejudice and all this, yeah. In the whole world, I think, in the field of art, it’s the best. I think people are more caring, and more understanding, and compassionate.

If you look. . . . Even in Japan, after the war, there were lot of mixed babies. Blacks and Whites with the Japanese. And they really look down on these children. It's not their fault. And the whole shipload---they shipped these kids to South America. I thought I can never forget that scene in the news, where these kids were still little. Maybe the oldest maybe about intermediate school. They('re) on this ship, and the only home they know is Japan. But these are outcasts. And they're crying on the ship, and whoever they know has come to see them off, they're going to be shipped to South America to start a new life. But look the poor kids. And the Japanese government didn't want them in their homeland.

And when I went to Japan in 1959, I went to the (Tokyo) Nichigeki Theater. That one day that I could get out. And all the fabulous shows, it's like when you go Las Vegas, and you see all these show girls. Now these are all Japanese girls. And then you look at the program booklet. There was about three, I think, *hapa*-Blacks. See, they're accepted in the entertainment world, plus *Haole*-Japanese. And they dancing with the full-blooded Japanese, and nice. Where else would they accept them in Japan? Shee! And in the field of athletics, they're accepted. Nothing else.

So, it's really sad. And when you think music, you can get a whole group of mixed race. You can get couple from Africa, a couple from England, couple from maybe, Middle East, and couple from Asia, and couple from the Polynesian group. And you give them all the music, and you get one conductor, what can you make? She can read music, you make music. And even if you didn't have knowledge of music, with the rhythm already, you bring your instrument. And to me, that's the best. Yeah. Peaceful. No more fighting and hatred. So, I really think more people should be like that.

So, I don't understand. I think people that don't love music, something's wrong. I don't think they can enjoy life to it's fullest. (Laughs) For real. Music makes the world go around. And you know what? You got to have music in anything. You got to have music to make it effective. Even in a funeral there's music. Yeah. A parade is nothing without a band. I tell you, I don't care where you go, you got to have music, whether it's a sad occasion or a happy occasion. And nothing else, I can describe the same as music. It's wonderful. So, for me, I don't have that kind of education, but through music, I've been blessed with a lot of things. I think that's all I can say.

HY: Okay. Thank you very much.

LY: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

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